

Living in Limbo:

A Case Study of Iraqi Refugees in Cairo.

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List of abbreviations.

AUC	The American University in Cairo.
CRS	Catholic Relief Services.
EPAU	Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit of the UNHCR.
FMRS	Forced Migration and Refugee Studies program of the American University in Cairo.
FRONTEX	The new European Border Management Agency.
GAFI	General Authority for Free Trade and Investment.
IDP	Internally displaced person.
IDSC	Information and Decision Support Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet of Ministers.
IOM	International Organization for Migration.
LE	Egyptian pounds.
MNF	Multi-National Force.
NGO	Non-governmental organization.
OAU	Organization of African Unity.
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization.
RSD	Refugee Status Determination.
SUDIA	Sudan Development Initiative Abroad.
SRCOE	Somali Refugee Community of Egypt.
STAR	Student Action for Refugees.
UAE	United Arab Emirates.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
UNDP	United Nations Development Program.
USRAP	United States' Refugee Admissions Program.
WLL	With Limited Liability.

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1. Introduction.

1.1 Overview of the situation.

The war that was launched in Iraq by the United States and its allies in 2003 has produced one of the largest humanitarian crises of our time, and the biggest in the Middle East since the Palestinian displacement at the inception of the State of Israel in 1948. Well over four million Iraqis of different religions, ethnicities and backgrounds are estimated to be uprooted by the violence in their country, and are in need of help. About half have fled to Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region, some have managed to be resettled to countries in the West, while many others have become internally displaced within Iraq's borders. While at first being generous and letting in all Iraqis fleeing, neighbouring countries have now resorted to measures such as restricting entry and, in some cases, deporting people, partly due to the lack of support from the international community.

Many of the Iraqis fleeing are from the middle class, and were able to bring some savings with them when entering their country of first asylum. However, with restrictions to seek employment these resources are soon running out, leaving Iraqis in an increasingly desperate situation. Other obstacles, such as restrictions on the right to public schooling and a lack of affordable health services are creating additional challenges for many. For some refugees, the difficulties they are facing in the host country are prompting them to make the difficult decision to return to Iraq, either temporarily to collect a pension or food ration or for other such reasons, or permanently because of their lack of money.

This paper will examine the legal context of Iraqi refugees in Cairo, as well as what the refugees themselves see as their biggest challenges in their situation as refugees in Egypt. Chapter two will explain the theoretical framework and methodology used in the research, chapter three will give some background information about how Iraqi refugees are perceived in the Arab media as well as the domestic policy environment of Egypt and international policies concerning refugees, while chapter four will concentrate on my research findings on Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

1.2 Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this study is mainly to shed some light on a refugee population that has largely been ignored by the international community. Although some reports and newspaper articles

have been written on the Iraqi refugee communities in Syria and Jordan, and to some extent on Lebanon, very little is known about the Iraqi refugees in Egypt, who also hosts a substantial number of refugees. As mentioned above, this paper examines the conditions of Iraqi refugees who have entered Egypt since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. In studying the livelihoods of Iraqis in Egypt, this paper also challenges popular Egyptian images of all Iraqis being wealthy by revealing the hardships faced by middle class Iraqis, who form the majority of Iraqis in Egypt. It is hoped that the findings will be applied to lobby for policies and programmes to better meet the socio-economic and legal needs both for Iraqi refugees and other refugee communities in Egypt, as well as in neighbouring countries.

1.3 Key research questions.

1. What are the legal and socio-economic conditions under which Iraqi refugees in Egypt live and strive to secure their livelihoods?
2. What are the resources and strategies that the refugees use in securing and enhancing their livelihood?
3. To what degree do Iraqi refugees in Egypt have contact with Egyptian citizens, other refugee groups, and fellow Iraqis?
4. What do Iraqis in Egypt recognize as their main concerns?

2. Theoretical reflections and methodology.

2.1 Review of the literature and the use of terms in this study.

In the following I will review the literature used for this paper, and the terms used will also be explained and reflected upon.

Firstly, the use of the term *refugee* in this study needs to be explained. The word is not easily defined, and is used in different ways by different organizations and scholars. The most commonly used is the definition of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which states that the term *refugee* shall apply to any person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”¹

Recognizing that this definition did not cover situations of mass flight from war, regional bodies such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) developed agreements like the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. These expanded the definition of refugees to include not only individuals who are subject to persecution, but also every person who “owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing the public order...is compelled to leave...to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.” The Cartagena Declaration, adopted in 1984 by a group of Latin American states, added massive human rights violations to this list.²

Many scholars find these legal definitions too narrow to use in their work, and this is also the author's view. I will adopt a way to look at refugees initially developed by Malkki³, and used

¹ 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/protect/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PROTECTION&id=3b66c2aa10>, (accessed May 29, 2008).

² Stanton Russel, Sharon, “Refugees: Risks and Challenges Worldwide”, Migration Information Source November 2002, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=64>, (accessed May 29, 2008).

³ Malkki, Liisa H., “Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania”, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

by Al-Sharmani⁴ and Grabska⁵. The term refugee should not be seen exclusively in the context of the country of origin experiences which led an individual or a group to flee their place of residence, and hence, left them with *a sense of loss* (in terms of protection, social networks, material property, etc.). Rather, by viewing refugees as ‘experiencing refugeeeness’ or being ‘in the state of refugeeeness’, this approach reveals the dynamic aspect of the concept, whereby one becomes a refugee not only by escaping violence and persecution and crossing an international border, but also by going through the refugee experience in the country of asylum, as part of evolving processes, relationships, networks, and experiences.⁶

Due to their ‘invisibility’ in urban spaces, where their legal status is often undetermined, refugees in urban areas of the global south are a particularly understudied population.⁷ However, the topic of urban refugees has been explored more and more in recent years, although lately the term ‘urban refugee’ has been used to describe different things by different scholars. Some use the term only when describing refugees originally coming from urban areas, while others include those from rural areas, as long as their new place of residence is an urban centre. When talking about urban refugees in this paper, I will use Jacobsen’s definition where she states that ‘urban refugees’ refers to refugees of rural or urban background that are resident in an area designated as urban by the government. In this paper the term will include recognized refugees (i.e. those who have undergone determination procedures and have achieved official refugee status in the eyes of the government), asylum seekers (those who have applied and are yet to undergo determination procedures), those with temporary protection (in Egypt, this means *prima facie* refugees), and those denied refugee status but who still remain in the country.⁸

⁴ Al-Sharmani, Mulki, “Livelihood and Identity Constructions of Somali Refugees in Cairo”, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 2, July 2003, The American University in Cairo, p. 2, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed July 2, 2008).

⁵ Grabska, Katarzyna, “Living on the Margins: The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt”, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 6, June 2005, The American University in Cairo, p. 11, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed July 2, 2008).

⁶ Al-Sharmani 2003, p. 4 in Grabska, Katarzyna, “Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol 19, No. 3, p. 290, August 8, 2006, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Cairo&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (entered July 2, 2008).

⁷ Dryden-Peterson, Sarah, “‘I Find Myself as Someone Who is in the Forest’: Urban Refugees as Agents of Social Change in Kampala, Uganda”, *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 10, 2006, p. 382, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/381?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=education+strategy&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed October 7, 2008).

⁸ Jacobsen, Karen, “Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective”, *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol.19, No. 3, Oxford University Press, August 2006, p. 274, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273>, (entered June 16, 2008).

In an article in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Jacobsen looks at urban refugees through a livelihoods perspective.⁹ This article is an introduction to a special issue of the journal in 2006, focusing specifically on urban refugees. The authors of the articles seek to understand the experience of urban refugees both by examining the refugees' own actions, and by understanding the social, economic and policy context in which they forge their livelihoods. Beginning with the policy and political context for refugees in the different cities explored, each author focuses on a particular aspect of the urban refugee experience. A common thread weaves the argument that urban refugees could be highly beneficial to cities if they were allowed to pursue productive lives absent from legal restrictions, harassment and insecurity.¹⁰ Refugees living in urban areas face a myriad of protection and livelihood problems not generally encountered by refugees in camps.¹¹ In terms of the profile of urban refugees, UNHCR contradicts previously held views that single males constitute the majority of refugee and asylum-seeker populations in urban areas. Basing its estimates on available statistics from 14 of the organization's urban programmes, combined with more complete situation analyses made by humanitarian agencies, UNHCR claims that the population profile is more like the 'normal' distribution: 48 per cent are females, 28 per cent are below the age of 18 and 12 per cent above the age of 60. However, existing information indicates that the profile of asylum-seekers and refugees in urban areas varies greatly from country to country, in numbers, gender, age, and social vulnerability.¹²

A term that is often used when discussing urban refugees is that of *marginalization*. As a relative term, marginalization refers to economic, cultural, legal, political and social inequality and exclusion, a state of 'being underprivileged and excluded'.¹³ For this paper I will adopt the same way of looking at marginalization as in Grabska's study of Sudanese refugees in Cairo, where she states that the process of marginalization needs to be considered as a three way dynamic: 1) being marginalized legally in terms of access to rights and services by the host government and the singling out of refugees by organizations providing

⁹ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 10, 2006, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

¹⁰ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", p. 273.

¹¹ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum...", p. 273.

¹² Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum...", p. 275.

¹³ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol 19, No. 3, p. 290, August 8, 2006, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Cairo&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (entered July 2, 2008).

assistance; 2) being discriminated against by the host society; and 3) excluding oneself from the host society.¹⁴

In some ways it can be said that marginalization is the opposite of *integration*. In their article “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework”¹⁵, Ager and Strang proposes some key domains of integration, namely achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment. Kibreab argues that there should be made a clearer distinction between ‘integration’ and ‘local settlement’ that he feels often is overlooked by most scholars. He points out that integration is the “economic, social and cultural process by which refugees become members of the host society on a permanent basis. Local settlement, however, is a situation in which the refugees may be settled in a host society, but they are isolated spatially and marginalized economically and legally.”¹⁶ I will use these definitions by Kibreab when discussing the integration (or rather the lack of it integration) of Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

In 1997, UNHCR issued a Policy on Refugees in Urban Areas, emphasizing protection, avoidance of dependency, and promotion of self-reliance. This had a mixed reception and there were many requests for clarification and revision. UNHCR’s Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) was asked in 1999 to review the policy and its implementation, and EPAU undertook various initiatives, including country case studies and workshops, to clarify the old policy and develop a new one underpinned by guiding principles. This revised policy is based on state responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers, with UNHCR activities complementary to and supportive of governmental and NGO (non-governmental organizations) /civil society efforts. UNHCR continues to emphasize protection, in line with its mandate. There is a call for the development of long-term solutions for refugees in urban areas, including intermediate steps such as self-reliance approaches, until a durable solution

¹⁴Grabska, Katarzyna, “Marginalization in Urban Spaces...”, p. 290.

¹⁵ Ager, Alastair & Strang, Alison, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework”, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2008 21(2), p. 166-191,
<http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/21/1/1?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=2008+Ager&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

¹⁶ Kibreab 1989:469 in Al-Sharmani, Mulki, “Livelihood and Identity Constructions of Somali Refugees in Cairo”, Forces Migration and Refugee Studies Programme at the American University in Cairo, Working Paper No. 2, July 2003, p. 4, can be accessed from
<http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

becomes available. Such self-reliance strategies might include providing language or skills training followed by job placements or loans, or apprenticeship.¹⁷ One of the case studies that are part of the evaluation of the UNHCR urban refugee policy was conducted in Cairo and published in 2001.¹⁸ A self-reliance workshop was convened in Cairo in October 1997 which resulted in the adoption of a strategy with two components: one was the implementation of a micro-credit pilot project for refugee women, the other the establishment of job-related vocational training programmes. However, neither could be implemented. The Egyptian authorities refused to grant permission for the micro-credit scheme while a shortage of funds on the part of UNHCR precluded the expansion of education and vocational training programmes.¹⁹

On the basis of the situation in Cairo, Sperl criticizes one of the objectives of the urban refugee policy, namely the way in which UNHCR is trying to reduce refugees' dependency on the organization. He explains that where refugees are not allowed to work and have the same access to services as nationals, the progressive reduction of UNHCR assistance will only result in worsening the marginalization and impoverishment of the refugees.²⁰ One of his conclusions is that when you consider that local integration remains a distant goal, and that UNHCR is increasingly unable to provide an adequate level of support, resettlement has become the only viable durable solution for refugees in Cairo. However, it is clear that most refugees will not be able to benefit from this opportunity and so attempts to promote improved self-reliance for refugees in Egypt has to remain a matter of high priority to the UNHCR office in Cairo.²¹

As illustrated above, when trying to develop a policy that supports urban refugees, humanitarian agencies and UNHCR are faced with many difficulties. An important one is the growing problem of declining funding levels, linked to the problems of donors earmarking funds for particular emergencies rather than protracted (long-term) refugee situations. Another

¹⁷ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 10, 2006, p. 277, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

¹⁸ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: A case study review of Cairo", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, June 2001, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹⁹ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy...", p. 3.

²⁰ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy...", p. 4.

²¹ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy...", p. 4.

problem is that aid agencies and UNHCR must also confront the political context of refugees and migration in the host country. Like all policy, refugee policy is primarily determined by domestic or regional politics, and in trying to influence refugee policy it is important to understand the government's underlying motivations.²² In the case of Egypt, regional state relations, Arab ideology, and Egypt's economic situation all influence its refugee policy. The majority of refugees in Egypt are Sudanese, with about 50,000 Palestinians also residing in the country. It would be inconceivable for Egypt to treat Palestinians as 'ordinary' asylum seekers requiring a status determination procedure, due to the official line of Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Instead they are treated as foreigners, and they have difficulty in obtaining work permits even after living in the country for over 50 years.²³ As Sperl shows, the Palestinians may actually be an obstacle to the adoption of a more generous policy towards refugees from other countries which should, one surmises, not be seen to benefit from more favourable terms than the Palestinians.

Focusing on livelihood strategies below, an explanation of exactly what is meant by the term 'livelihood' is needed. Chambers and Conway define 'livelihood' as comprising the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required by people to live.²⁴ In this paper I adopt the definition used by Al-Sharmani²⁵, where he defines livelihood as legal, economic, educational, and social capital that refugees strive to secure and maximize in order to get by in Cairo and plan ahead for their future.²⁶

Livelihood approaches to refugees have become increasingly common in academic research as well as in advocate agencies' practice during the last decade. Many authors advocate that by using a livelihood approach, relief can better prepare displaced people for one of UNHCRs

²² Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2006, p. 279, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

²³ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: A case study review of Cairo", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, June 2001, p. 11, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

²⁴ Chambers and Conway 1992 in Grabska, Katarzyna, "Living on the Margins: The Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 6 June 2005 p.8, the American University in Cairo, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed August 6, 2008).

²⁵ Al-Sharmani, Mulki, "Refugee Livelihoods: Livelihood and diasporic identity constructions of Somali refugees in Cairo", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 104, 2004, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 20, 2008).

²⁶ ²⁶ Al-Sharmani, Mulki, "Refugee Livelihoods: Livelihood and diasporic...", p. 2.

so-called durable solutions while avoiding the creation of a dependency-syndrome. The dependency-syndrome puts people in a trap that makes it unable for people to break free from reliance on external assistance. This is often caused by basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remaining unfulfilled after years in exile.²⁷ It is evident that livelihood opportunities can be enhanced or limited by factors in the refugees' external environment. Refugees do not only have to cope with the often traumatic experience of flight and displacement, but also often end up with limited resources due to loss of assets and capabilities.²⁸ Livelihood strategies employed by forced migrants as an adaptation to new environments not only impact but also derive from existing social structures and concepts of identity. Important strategies that often still play a great role in refugee situations include the use of strong social networks; a high degree of mobility; making use of various agricultural, trading and professional skills; gaining education; and dispersing investments. These strategies were often aimed at increasing capital and reducing risks even before flight, as many refugees come from contexts in which insecurity was a normal state of affairs.²⁹

A common subject of study when discussing urban refugees is one of the key livelihood aspects of urban refugees, namely social capital. In her article, Jacobsen describes social capital as the support provided by the refugees' co-nationals already living in the city they arrive in³⁰. This support includes material and emotional support, advice, and connections with employment and financial networks. Social capital can also be created through local friendships or the presence of charitable organizations or charity-minded individuals who seek to assist refugees or particular national groups for personal reasons.³¹ Social networks typically include relatives, friends, neighbours, or people with shared characteristics; and these networks have a variety of functions while changing over time. Networks change to deal with changing realities after flight, with neighbours, for example, playing a more vital role in

²⁷ De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence", UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2006, p. 2, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 16, 2008).

²⁸ De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee Livelihoods...", p. 1.

²⁹ Horst, Cindy, "Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity and Transformations", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 2006, available from <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/25/2/6?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=horst&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 22, 2008).

³⁰ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2006, p. 282, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

³¹ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum...", p. 283.

assisting each other as a consequence of the absence of relatives.³² Before, during and after flight, social capital enable people to access resources and make choices they might otherwise not be able to make. Migration, including forced migration, is mostly possible through the assistance of relatives, in terms of financial support, information and contacts. These networks link refugees in camps to those in urban areas and in the home country, as well as linking regional refugees with members of the wider diaspora.³³ Social capital also includes political assets that are very important in accessing other resources. Political assets include organizational power and leadership, representation of groups, and a knowledge of 'how the system works'. Political assets also relate to political position in the country of origin: refugees who are associated with particular groups may have different kinds of access to assets³⁴, such as the case was for Iraqis under Saddam Hussein.

Despite theoretical recognition of the close link between forced migration and social networks, empirical research, in terms of the collection of actual social network data, seems to have lagged behind³⁵. Although some studies have been conducted, they most often do not include an analysis of the importance of social networks. However, a study by Willems³⁶ from 2003 intends to illustrate that the Congolese, Burundian and Rwandese urban refugees in Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania depend on their social networks to either find gainful local employment in the informal sector as hairdressers, tailors, daily labourers, etc. or receive financial support from friends and relatives, whether from the other side of town or from the other side of the world. One of Willem's findings is that Dar Es Salaam's urban refugees rely not only on their social network members from before the flight, but that newly established ties in exile are equally essential with regard to both material and emotional support.³⁷

³² Horst, Cindy, "Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity and Transformations", *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 2006, p. 11, available from <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/25/2/6?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=horst&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 22, 2008).

³³ Horst, Cindy, "Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity...", p. 12.

³⁴ Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2006, p. 283, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

³⁵ Willems, Roos, "Embedding the Refugee Experience: Forced Migration and Social Networks in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania", University of Florida, 2003, etd.fcla.edu/UF/UFE0002281/willems_r.pdf, p. 10, (accessed October 8, 2008).

³⁶ Willems, Roos, "Embedding the...", p. 11.

³⁷ Willems, Roos, "Embedding the...", p. 12.

Another livelihood strategy that has been identified to remain important for refugee communities after flight, is investing in education and skills development.³⁸ Refugees often see the education of their children as a principal way of ensuring a better future for their family, regardless of where that future will be.³⁹

Some studies on refugee livelihoods have also observed what researchers call ‘negative coping strategies’. These strategies become more frequent when few other options are available: some see themselves forced to sell off vital assets such as domestic items, clothes, part of their food rations if they get one, etc. Many find themselves obliged to resort to crime, violence, loans that they are not able to repay, to reduce the intake of food, or selling sexual services as a means of making a living.⁴⁰ In their attempts to establish livelihoods, women and girls face particular risks. For instance, girls are the first to be pulled out of schools or face early marriage when household livelihoods are on the brink.⁴¹

Some reports and articles have been written about the Iraqi refugees following the 2003 U.S. invasion. These studies are mainly from Syria or Jordan, the countries with the highest numbers of Iraqi refugees. No extensive study is yet conducted on the Iraqi refugee community in Egypt, although, as mentioned above, a study at the American University in Cairo is currently in the making. Among the studies on Iraqis in Syria and Jordan is a survey conducted by the Norwegian research institute FAFO on request from the Government of Jordan.⁴² The task was to conduct a survey that would provide the Jordanian government with an assessment that reflects the reality of the Iraqi community in Jordan and that would enable the government to address the needs of this community.⁴³ While figures as high as one million had been aired, the FAFO study concluded that there were between 450,000-500,000 Iraqi residents in Jordan as of May 2007. Some of the characteristics of the Iraqi households and

³⁸ Horst, Cindy, “Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity and Transformations”, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, 2006, p. 13, available from <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/25/2/6?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=horst&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 22, 2008).

³⁹ Dryden-Peterson, Sarah, “Educating Refugees in Countries of First Asylum: The Case of Uganda”, *Migration Information Source*, May 2004, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=220>, (accessed September 22, 2008).

⁴⁰ De Vriese, Machtelt, “Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence”, UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2006, p. 21-22, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 16, 2008).

⁴¹ De Vriese, Machtelt, “Refugee Livelihoods: A Review...”, p. 23.

⁴² Dalen, Kristin; Pedersen, Jon; Attallah, Akram and Dæhlen, Marianne, “Iraqis in Jordan 2007: Their Number and Characteristics”, 2007, <http://www.fafo.no/ais/middeast/jordan/IJ.pdf>, (accessed June 9, 2008).

⁴³ Dalen, Kristin; Pedersen, Jon; Attallah, Akram and Dæhlen, Marianne, “Iraqis...”, p. 1.

individuals are, according to the study, that the migration of Iraqis is predominantly a migration of families, with the highest volume of movement of population taking place in 2004 and 2005, according to the Jordanian border authorities. The survey showed that Iraqis in Jordan are well educated and that 22 percent of Iraqi adults are working. The majority of the Iraqis live on savings or receives transfers, with 42 percent receiving such transfers from Iraq. This makes a large segment of Iraqi households in Jordan at risk of becoming vulnerable with the depletion of savings, or the deterioration in the security situation in Iraq that may affect the transfers of funds that supports a significant portion of the Iraqi community in Jordan.⁴⁴ The survey also finds that there is a large group of Iraqi children who are not attending school even though they are within school age. Of the total population of Iraqi children between 6 and 17, only 17.78 percent are currently enrolled in school. This is much lower than the Jordanian enrolment rates that reach 93 percent of the same age group. The research team also found that of the Iraqi children enrolled in school, about three in four attend private schools whereas the remaining one in four attends public schools.⁴⁵ The population of Iraqis is almost exclusively urban and hence most of them benefit from the infrastructure in the capital city of Amman and other large cities. Almost all households are connected to the public electricity network, the water network and the sewage network.⁴⁶

Another study conducted on the Iraqi refugee population is The Brookings Institution's survey on the Iraqi refugees who have been arriving in Syria since 2003.⁴⁷ One of the study's findings is that Iraqis coming to Syria after the U.S. invasion primarily are from urban areas and represent diverse sectarian backgrounds, and reported numerous reasons for leaving their country. Many left as a direct result of conflict, mostly from the rising sectarian violence but also from fighting between the insurgents and the Multinational Forces allied with the Iraqi military. Iraqis sought refuge in Syria rather than in other countries for a number of reasons: geographic proximity, simple entry requirements, relatively easy access to services, common language, the low cost of living and often the presence of family or friends in Syria played a

⁴⁴ Dalen, Kristin; Pedersen, Jon; Attallah, Akram and Dæhlen, Marianne, "Iraqis in Jordan 2007: Their Number and Characteristics", 2007, p. 3, <http://www.fao.no/ais/mideast/jordan/IJ.pdf>, (accessed June 9, 2008).

⁴⁵ Dalen, Kristin; Pedersen, Jon; Attallah, Akram and Dæhlen, Marianne, "Iraqis...", p. 21.

⁴⁶ ⁴⁶ Dalen, Kristin; Pedersen, Jon; Attallah, Akram and Dæhlen, Marianne, "Iraqis...", p. 5.

⁴⁷ Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot", An Occasional Paper from The Brookings Institution, University of Bern, Washington D.C., June 2007, <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/200706iraq.pdf>, (accessed June 9, 2008).

part.⁴⁸ The study found that Iraqis fleeing overland to Syria generally do not bring much money with them because they fear looters on the road. Once in Syria, many rely on transfers from friends and family in Iraq.

Iraqis in Syria who have the means to do so visit private doctors and clinics, while most poor Iraqis rely on Syrian Red Crescent clinics. Syrian charitable organizations also provide some health services to refugees.⁴⁹ The medical problems that dominate are diabetes, and conditions linked to unhealthy diets in general. Psychological trauma also appears to be a major problem.⁵⁰

Syrians generally believe that the Iraqi refugees are rich, that they came with a lot of savings. The fact, the researchers find, is that rich Iraqis are a small minority of the Iraqis in Syria. Frequently, the limited funds the Iraqis have been able to bring from Iraq runs out before steady employment can be secured, and many Iraqis must take dangerous trips to Iraq to sell off cars and other valuables.⁵¹ An interesting fact showed in the study is that Islamic charitable organizations (local or international) do not seem to be mobilized, either with their own funds or as an implementing partner for the government or UNHCR. Also, the fact that there are few community-based organizations means that the Iraqi refugees have to rely on institutional help – The Red Crescent, Syrian government services for health and education, Syrian Christian charities – or themselves and their kin.⁵²

In Lebanon a similar survey was conducted by the Danish Refugee Council.⁵³ The survey's goal was to arrive at a population estimate of Iraqis in Lebanon and to examine other demographic characteristics, living conditions and protection issues. The number of Iraqis in Lebanon was estimated at 50,000 by the researchers. The figure was arrived at using several methods and utilizing data from UNHCR files and numbers from the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, as well as findings from the field survey. Most of the Iraqis interviewed for the

⁴⁸ Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot", An Occasional Paper from The Brookings Institution, University of Bern, Washington D.C., June 2007, p. 1, <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/200706iraq.pdf>, (accessed June 9, 2008).

⁴⁹ Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees...", p. 2.

⁵⁰ Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees...", p. 32.

⁵¹ Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees...", p. 34.

⁵² Al-Khalidi, Ashraf; Hoffman, Sophia and Tanner, Victor, "Iraqi Refugees...", p. 40.

⁵³ Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population Survey in Lebanon: A Report", Beirut, November 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=4762690f2>, (accessed June 16, 2008).

survey were originally from the area of Baghdad, and were living illegally in Lebanon. Among the Iraqi population, the researchers found two kinds of living arrangements; the family environment and the house-mates environment. While the first is based on kinship, the latter is based on a mutual financial convenience of sharing rent as a coping mechanism.⁵⁴ Chronic health problems were reported among 10 percent of individuals surveyed, while 19 percent sought health care services. Health care costs for acute illnesses and injuries that occur to household members are mostly borne by households themselves. A similar pattern was observed for chronic diseases.⁵⁵

General school enrolment was found to be 58 percent of individuals between 6 and 17 years. Also, a number of recommendations are provided in the report. These include hastening the formalization of the legal status of Iraqis in Lebanon, since the majority of respondents indicated personal threat as the principal reason for leaving Iraq followed by a threatening environment. Recommendations also include enhancing current coordination efforts by organizations from various sectors to ensure service coverage in a manner that facilitates the physical survival of the Iraqis and maintains their human dignity.⁵⁶

When it comes to research on the situation of refugees in Egypt, most have been made possible due to the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Centre (FMRS)⁵⁷ at the American University in Cairo (AUC), which has produced several studies on different refugee groups in Egypt. These reports include Grabska's and Al-Sharmani's studies mentioned above, as well as others focusing at distinct issues such as the specific rights of refugees in Egypt⁵⁸, the situation of different refugee groups in Cairo such as the Eritrean and Ethiopian⁵⁹, the providing of health care information in Cairo⁶⁰, separated refugee children in the city if

⁵⁴ Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population Survey in Lebanon: A Report", Beirut, November 2007, p. 10, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=4762690f2>, (accessed June 16, 2008).

⁵⁵ Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population Survey...", pp. 10-11.

⁵⁶ Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population Survey...", p. 12.

⁵⁷ FMRS recently changed name to Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies.

⁵⁸ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", July 2006, The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, The American University in Cairo and The Development Research Center on Migration, Globalization, and Poverty, University of Sussex, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed September 25, 2008).

⁵⁹ Thomas, Louise, "'The Son of a Snake is a Snake': Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Mixed Eritrean-Ethiopian Families in Cairo", The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program Working Paper No. 7, 2006, The American University in Cairo, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed September 25, 2008).

⁶⁰ Eidenier, Emily K, "Providing Health Care Information to Refugees in Cairo: Questions of Access and Integration", May 28, 2005, American University in Cairo, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed September 25, 2008).

Cairo⁶¹, to mention some. In the first asylum countries of Africa and Asia, many governments require asylum seekers and refugees to live in camps or settlements in designated areas, and only those who obtain special permits – usually for health reasons or special protection needs – are allowed to reside in the cities.⁶² In Egypt, however, this is not the case. Egypt is one of very few countries in Africa that does not have refugee camps, in spite of the fact that many refugees live there. Instead refugees are self-settled, mainly in the largest cities, such as Cairo and Alexandria. The situation of refugees in Egypt will be examined further in chapter 3 (3.5).

2.2 Research design.

Given the scarcity of literature on Iraqi refugees in Cairo, a qualitative case study approach was employed in the research. Statistical sampling and quantitative data sampling would have been impossible given the fact that the exact number of Iraqi refugees and reliable demographic information about them is not available at this time, and given the time frame of the research. In addition to in-depth interviews conducted with Iraqi refugees and service providers to refugees in Cairo, I use data from a variety of written sources, both academic literature, news articles, and research reports. Whereas the legal framework necessarily needs to be considered to fully grasp the factors that have an impact on the situation of refugees in Egypt, a bottom-up approach will offer additional valuable information from the perspective of the refugees themselves. Through this triangulation of methods I hope to get more reliable data than if only one source of information had been used.

In-depth interviews, which are essentially exploratory conversations between subject and researcher, have pluses and minuses. On the plus side, they can give a rich store of descriptive and anecdotal data, which suggests patterns, variables and hypotheses for further study. In areas or circumstances about which we know very little, these descriptive data reveal much about how forced migrants live, the problems they encounter, their coping or survival strategies, and the shaping of their identities and attitudes. However, such data should not be assumed to represent the totality of a refugee population's experience, and they should not be

⁶¹ Maxwell, Laura & El-Hilaly, Aya, "Separated Refugee Children in Cairo: A Rights-Based Analysis", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 5, September 2004, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed September 25, 2008).

⁶² Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, September 2006, p. 274, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=jacobsen&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 6, 2008).

presented as if they do.⁶³ Studies based on small-samples often have problems that limit their ability to satisfy the demands of academic credibility and responsible advocacy. Unless very carefully selected, non-representative studies, especially those with small samples, do not often yield enough cases or the right kind of cases to allow us to test competing hypotheses and casual relationships.⁶⁴

2.3 Carrying out the research.

The research began by studying the relevant literature on refugees in Egypt generally and on Iraqi refugees after 2003 especially. Among this literature was documents relating to Egyptian policies concerning refugees, and reports by researchers and advocacy organizations.

Information on Iraqi refugees came mainly from reports from international organizations on Iraqis in Syria and Jordan, since very little has been written on the Iraqi community in Egypt, and then mainly in the form of newspaper articles.

The fieldwork took place in Cairo and its suburbs, as the main place where Iraqi refugees reside in Egypt. It lasted from August 15 -December 15, 2007, and then from February 28 until April 1, 2008. I started with contacting the Egyptian Foreign Ministry since I believed they would be the most difficult to reach. I also contacted service providers for refugees in Cairo, to find out whether any of them already had researched the situation of the Iraqi refugees in the country. In addition I spent quite some time at the American University in Cairo (AUC), as the AUC library has a big collection on refugees and displaced people, called the Gray Files, and I also attended seminars at AUC provided by the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program (FMRS), one focusing specifically on Iraqi refugee women in Cairo.

⁶³ Jacobsen, Karen & Landau, Loren, "Researching Refugees: some methodological and ethical considerations in social science and forced migration", New Issues in Refugee Research, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, Working Paper No. 90, p. 6, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/research/3b8a11284/skip-60.html>, (accessed September 26, 2008).

⁶⁴ Ragin, Charles, "'Casing' and the Process of Social Inquiry", *What Is A Case: Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, edited by C. C. Ragin and H. Becker, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 217-226, and Savolainen, Jukka, "The Rationality of Drawing Big Conclusions Based on Small Samples: In Defense of Mill's Methods", *Social Forces Vol. 72*, 1994, p. 1217-1223, in Jacobsen, Karen & Landau, Loren, "Researching Refugees: some methodological and ethical considerations in social science and forced migration", New Issues in Refugee Research, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, Working Paper No. 90, p. 6, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/research/3b8a11284/skip-60.html>, (accessed September 26, 2008).

As mentioned above, the interviews conducted with Iraqi refugees were semi-structured and in-depth. I conducted some of the interviews in their homes, and others in cafés, according to what the refugees themselves preferred. In addition to allowing me to meet other family members, house visits also gave me an opportunity to learn something about their living conditions. Interviews were also conducted with employees at NGOs and faith-based organizations, as well as with an official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, 'Abīr 'Aṭīfa who is the spokesperson of the regional office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, an official at the International Organization for Migration, students from Student Action for Refugees (STAR) at the American University in Cairo, Egyptians working in the real-estate business, and other Egyptians I met during the fieldwork.⁶⁵

I also met with the person who is one of the persons who knows most about refugees in Cairo generally, and certainly about Iraqi refugees, namely Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond. She recently (August 2008) left her position as a Distinguished Adjunct Professor at the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program at AUC, and has previously written important books and articles on refugees, in addition to founding the Refugees Studies Centre at the University of Oxford. Much of her work has focused on holding governments and inter-governmental agencies accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities towards refugees. Her book "Imposing Aid" from 1986 broke new ground by providing a critical analysis of the refugee aid regime. One of her latest publications is "Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism"⁶⁶, co-authored with Verdirame. This book has as a starting point the frequent critique made of UNHCR's protection role, which says that as UNHCR has grown as a humanitarian aid delivery agency, law and human rights have lost currency. Harrell-Bond and Verdirame reaches an even harsher conclusion: UNHCR itself directly violates the human rights of the people it is supposed to protect. Harrell-Bond has been especially interested in Iraqi refugees living in Cairo the last years, and is currently involved in a project called Iraqi Voices in Cairo, which will be mentioned in more detail below.

⁶⁵ All interviews with Iraqis were conducted in the Arabic language, while the rest was for the most part conducted in English. I did not use a questionnaire, but I had help from an Iraqi national to see over the questions I was planning to ask the refugees, so that I was certain I was using the right words.

⁶⁶ Harrell-Bond, Barbara & Verdirame, Guglielmo, "Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism", 2005, Berghahn Books, New York – Oxford.

2.4 Methodological and ethical concerns.

In general, carrying out research in Egypt can be problematic, especially if the study tackles sensitive issues. Problems have previously been encountered by other researchers with the security apparatus in Egypt while carrying out research on the situation of Palestinians in Egypt. Security officials found the topic extremely sensitive due to the wider political debates on Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, and stopped the research project.⁶⁷ Fortunately I did not have any problems in this regard, and I was, as mentioned above, fortunate enough to get an interview at the Foreign Ministry although I was lacking a research permit.

Researchers can also confront many difficulties trying to identify members of a particular refugee population within a local community in order to develop an appropriate sampling frame. Poor census data and the invisibility of my target group unfortunately made it impossible to obtain a perfectly random sample, so I had to think of other ways to make a sampling frame. During the first couple of months of my fieldwork I had problems locating Iraqi refugees. I had anticipated it to be easier to locate more Iraqi refugees through the ones I met first, and was initially prepared to use a snowball sampling technique in my research. However, this proved to be very difficult because of mistrust issues that exist among the Iraqi refugees, and which make them have less contact with each other than what is common in other refugee groups in Cairo (the issue of mistrust among the refugees will be examined further in chapter 4). The problems locating informants, as well as the limited time period spent in Egypt had an affect on the number of Iraqi interviewees, which ended up being 13 persons, 5 women and 8 men, between the ages 24 and 52.

I had read and been told by Egyptians and other researchers that many Iraqis lived in the satellite city of 6.of October, but when I went there the first times I did not know where to look, and no maps exist of the area. Only after interviewing an official at the office of UNHCR in 6.of October City did I get some hints at where in the city many of the Iraqis were located. I found an Iraqi shop in the area, asked the employees if they would be able to help me, which they did without hesitation. I got in contact with other interviewees through different connections at the American University in Cairo (AUC), and two were met when I

⁶⁷ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty at the University of Sussex, July 2006, p. 8, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 3, 2008).

came along with students providing English classes to refugees in 6. of October City, located at a community centre for Sudanese refugees.

One of my concerns when planning the fieldwork in Cairo was whether or not to use a research assistant. In much of the literature on refugees the authors use research assistants to carry out at least some of the interviews, and these assistants are often from the same refugee community as the persons they are interviewing. Using research assistants from the same country or area as the respondent, however, risks transgressing political, social, or economic fault-lines of which the researcher may not be aware. In highly sectarian countries, it is quite possible that a research assistant may be associated – by name, appearance, accent, or style of dress – with a group the respondent either fears or despises. This undoubtedly influences the quality of the data collected. That the research assistant may be affiliated with a group at odds with the refugees being interviewed also raises the possibility that information will be used against a particular sub-group.⁶⁸ For these reasons I decided against using an assistant. Because of the tension between different ethnic and sectarian groups in Iraq, as well as between those who worked with and those who worked against the Americans, it would not have been responsible for me to have one Iraqi interview another about what could be experienced as sensitive issues. I therefore decided to conduct all the interviews personally, to reduce the possibility of making people uncomfortable or even afraid.

I conducted most of the interviews outside, and as mentioned above I let the interviewees decide where they wanted to talk. Most often this was at a café where the respondent had previously been, and close to their residence. Only on two occasions did I conduct the interview in the respondents' homes, as this was their preferred location. Because most of the interviews took place at cafés, I always had the same problem when finishing an interview, namely paying for what I had ordered. Most of the interviews were with Iraqi men, and they always wanted to pay the whole bill, in accordance with their culture. In retrospect this should not have surprised me, as Arabs are well known for their hospitality and generosity. Because the interviewees were mostly men and I am female, this also contributed to make the issue more difficult. Nevertheless I had not anticipated this, and it made both the interviewee and me uncomfortable when I insisted on paying if not the whole bill, than at least what I had

⁶⁸ Jacobsen, Karen & Landau, Loren, "Researching Refugees: some methodological and ethical considerations in social science and forced migration", New Issues in Refugee Research, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, Working Paper No. 90, p. 9-10, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/research/3b8a11284/skip-60.html>, (accessed September 26, 2008).

been drinking myself. After the first interview I started ordering only a cup of coffee, in case I would not be able to persuade the person interviewed not to pay for me.

Another issue when an outsider is researching a refugee community, is that one is likely to arouse expectations of help or be seen as a way of affecting change.⁶⁹ Because of this, I was very careful to explain to the refugees I interviewed that I was a university student, and that I could not help them getting resettled or make the UNHCR or other organizations work faster. What I could do was give them the information I had about service providers and general information that could benefit them, as I got the impression that many of the Iraqis did not have access to all the available information of importance to them.

A tape-recorder was brought to the field, but never used. I chose not to both because I did not know whether the refugees were in the country legally or not, so I could put them in a difficult situation, and because I was afraid that taping them would make them answer differently and make them uncomfortable. Instead I took notes during the interviews, and wrote down all I remembered as soon as possible after the interview was over.

I explained my research as detailed as possible to all the respondents before asking them if they would be willing to be interviewed, and got their permission (informed consent). I also explained that they would be anonymous, and that I would not reveal any information that could lead to them being identified. Information given me in confidence and which I was told not to publish is not part of this paper and is kept private. Everyone asked agreed to assist me without hesitating, and they were all very kind and helpful.

⁶⁹ Harrell-Bond, Barbara and Voutira, Eftihia, "In Search of 'Invisible' Actors: Barriers to Access in Refugee Research", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 2007, Oxford University Press, s. 291, available at <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/20/2/281?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Egypt&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed August 21, 2008).

3. Background.

3.1 Egyptian migration to Iraq from the 1970s and onward.

In the seventies and eighties, millions of Egyptians went to Iraq to work and send money home to their families. This labour migration is affecting Iraqi refugees in Egypt even today, as many Egyptians feel they owe it to the Iraqis to help them when it is them that are now in a difficult situation, and thus this makes Egyptians less xenophobic towards the Iraqi refugees. However it also makes many Iraqis think that the Egyptians should at least let them have access to work, since they offered employment to such high numbers of Egyptians during the 70s and 80s, and can make them even more disappointed when they don't receive the assistance they feel they deserve.

In the 70s, Egyptians started to migrate to capital-rich Arab countries as labourers, and this migration brought massive transfers of wages and remittances to Egypt's economy. Such transfers amounted to \$2 billion in 1979 – revenues equivalent to the combined returns that year of Egypt's cotton exports, Suez Canal receipts, tourism, and the value added from the Aswan High Dam.⁷⁰ Egypt is considered to have the largest source of labourers in the Arab world, and thus Iraq opened economic relations with Egypt despite the political break between the two countries caused by the Egyptian peace treaty with the state of Israel signed at Camp David, and which had been opposed by Iraq.⁷¹ In a short time thousand of Egyptians moved to Iraq, where the government allowed them to stay unconditionally with no visa for any length of time.⁷² During Iraq's eight-year war with Iran, Egyptians formed the bulk of Iraq's labour force as Baghdad dragooned able-bodied young men to create an army of around a million soldiers.⁷³ Most Egyptians working in Iraq were employed in ministries and government institutions, but many also worked in private sector factories, farms, and service projects. The Iraqi government passed laws to facilitate work for Egyptians in Iraq, including the right to establish companies, institutions, and factories. They were exempt from taxes and had unlimited foreign fund transfers. They also had the opportunity to register their children

⁷⁰ Latowsky, Robert J, "Egyptian Labor Abroad: Mass Participation and Modest Returns", MERIP Reports, No. 123, Migrant Workers in the Middle East, May 1984, p. 11-12, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3011280?seq=1>, (accessed August 11, 2008).

⁷¹ Abdullah, Kifah. N, "When Egyptians Lived in Iraq", *Iraqis in Egypt, Voices*, August 5, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/whenegyptians.html>, (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁷² Abdullah, Kifah. N, "When Egyptians...".

⁷³ Latowsky, Robert J, "Egyptian Labor Abroad: Mass Participation and Modest Returns", MERIP Reports, No. 123, Migrant Workers in the Middle East, May 1984, p. 11-12, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3011280?seq=1>, (accessed August 11, 2008).

in public schools, and had free access to all hospitals and health centres. In addition they also had the right to gain Iraqi nationality.⁷⁴ By the end of 1981 the number of Egyptians working in Iraq reached more than three million. By 1985 the number was six and a half million, and in 1987 there were eight million Egyptians living in Iraq.⁷⁵

3.2 Refugees from Iraq before and after the 2003 US invasion.

It is important to mention that refugees and internally displaced people are not a new phenomenon for Iraq. Between 1 and 2 million Iraqis estimated to be living outside Iraq before the 2003 invasion were believed to have a well-founded fear of persecution if they returned, although only about 300,000 had a formal recognition as refugees or asylum seekers in 2001. In addition there were an estimated 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq that year. About 600,000 of the IDPs were displaced due to Kurdish factional infighting in the northern part of Iraq⁷⁶, while the government under Saddam Hussein expelled more than 100,000 Kurds as well as members of the smaller Turkmen and Assyrian minorities from the oil-rich Kirkuk region in an effort to ‘Arabize’ the area.⁷⁷

The US-led invasion in 2003 has resulted in further mass displacement of Iraqis. Aid agencies warned, and governments in the region feared, that the invasion would trigger a massive flow of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced. Although this did not happen as quickly as many expected it to, as the political and security situation steadily deteriorated during the first four years after the invasion, large numbers of Iraqis found themselves forced to move in search of security. The invasion threw the country into what has been described as a civil war between Shi’a, who had largely been excluded by Saddam Hussein’s regime, and Sunnis who until then had dominated the government. Intense sectarian violence, combined with coalition military action, fighting among Shi’a militias and between the government and the Shiite

⁷⁴ Abdullah, Kifah. N, “When Egyptians Lived in Iraq”, *Iraqis in Egypt, Voices*, August 5, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/whenegyptians.html>, (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁷⁵ Abdullah, Kifah. N, “When Egyptians Lived in Iraq”, *Iraqis in Egypt, Voices*, August 5, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/whenegyptians.html>, (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁷⁶ USCRI, “World Refugee Survey Country Report for Iraq 2002”, http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?__VIEWSTATE=dDwtOTMxNDcwOTk7O2w8Q291bnRyeUREOkdvQnV0dG9uOz4%2BUwqzZxIYLI0SfZCZue2XtA0UFEQ%3D&cid=486&subm=&ssm=&map=&searchtxt=, (accessed October 29, 2008).

⁷⁷ Cohen, Roberta, “Iraq’s Displaced: Where to Turn?” *American University International Law Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, Fall 2008, p. 1, available from http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2008/10_iraq_cohen.aspx, (accessed October 29, 2008).

Mahdi army as well as generalized violence caused massive uprooting, especially during 2006 and 2007. In 2007, some 60,000 Iraqis were reported to be fleeing their homes each month.⁷⁸ Currently (October 2008), an estimated fifteen to twenty percent of the Iraqi population – or 4,7 million people out of a total of 27 million – remains displaced. Of this total, 2,7 million are displaced inside Iraq, while some 2 million are abroad, mostly in Iraq's neighbouring countries.⁷⁹

3.3 The international response to the Iraqi refugee crisis.

In addition to the obligations states hold in relation to refugees in their own jurisdiction, the international community also has a responsibility to assist host nations in a region that are supporting large numbers of refugees. This comes from the legal obligation under the principle of responsibility and burden sharing that attaches state parties to the UN Refugee Convention, and that has been reaffirmed in numerous Conclusions of the Executive Committee of UNHCR and in the Agenda of Protection.⁸⁰ The preamble to the 1951 Refugee Convention notes that “the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries” and that refugee solutions “cannot therefore be achieved without international cooperation.”⁸¹ However, the world's governments have done little to help the Iraqi refugees, and financial assistance to host countries and agencies working to support and protect the refugees still remains low. Almost no bilateral support from other states has been received by the principal host countries, and the United Nations and other international agencies need additional funding to keep essential programmes running for the refugees.⁸²

Iraq's neighbouring states (with the biggest numbers in Syria and Jordan) are hosting the vast majority of the refugees following the invasion by US and coalition forces in 2003 with a handful – less than 1 per cent – making it to Europe and North America.⁸³ In contrast to

⁷⁸ Cohen, Roberta, “Iraq's Displaced: Where to Turn?” *American University International Law Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, Fall 2008, p. 1, available from http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2008/10_iraq_cohen.aspx, (accessed October 29, 2008).

⁷⁹ Cohen, Roberta, “Iraq's Displaced...”, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Amnesty International, “Rhetoric and Reality: the Iraqi Refugee Crisis”, June 15, 2008, p. 34 of the PDF, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/011/2008/en>, (accessed July 29, 2008).

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, “Iraq: From a Flood to a Trickle. Neighboring States Stop Iraqis Fleeing War and Persecution”, April 2007, <http://hrw.org/backgrounder/refugees/iraq0407/>, (accessed July 17, 2008).

⁸² Amnesty International, “Rhetoric and Reality: The Iraqi Refugee Crisis”, June 15, 2008, London UK, p. 4, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/011/2008/en/43d5f798-3637-11dd-9db5-cb00b5aed8dc/mde140112008eng.html>, (accessed July 18, 2008).

⁸³ Sengupta, Kim, “Iraqi refugee crisis grows as West turns its back”, *The Independent*, June 15, 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraqi-refugee-crisis-grows-as-west-turns-its-back-847473.html>, (accessed July 29, 2008).

Egypt, who treats the Iraqis entering the country as asylum seekers, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon treat them as “guests” rather than refugees. The reason for the difference in practice is that Egypt is the only one of these countries which is a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. Already in January 2006, Jordan closed its borders to most Iraqi refugees.⁸⁴ Syria was the last neighbouring country to close their borders to Iraqi refugees in 2007, unless they have an advanced permission, which is usually given for reasons of commerce. A Syrian government spokesman has explained that the reason they closed the borders was the lack of international support.⁸⁵

In September 2007, the League of Arab States (Jāmi‘at ad-Duwal al-‘Arabiyya), in line with a resolution by its member states, established a special account for governments, private sector and individuals to contribute funds in support of displaced Iraqis in neighbouring countries. The league also, in partnership with UNHCR and other international organizations, launched a major fund-raising and public awareness campaign called “Arabs Hand-in-Hand with Iraqis” in January 2008. ‘Amr Mūsā, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, states that: “Arabs Hand-in-Hand with Iraqis is first and foremost a show of support and solidarity to displaced Iraqis. But, we certainly hope and count on the generosity of Arabs to lend a supporting hand to the most vulnerable of Iraqis in neighbouring countries”.⁸⁶

The Iraqi government itself has long been accused of not doing enough to assist the refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). In March 2008, the Iraqi government had finally provided \$25 million to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to help meet the needs of Iraqi refugees in these countries. Yet, despite numerous requests from neighbouring countries for more involvement, the Iraqi government has failed to deliver additional assistance. Instead, the Iraqi government has actively encouraged a policy of returns, by asking neighbouring countries to close their borders, providing financial incentives to refugee families, and issuing non-exit stamps when refugees return to Iraq. This policy will be examined further in chapter 4.

Resettlement is a small but essential part of the response needed. Despite repeated calls for this option to be taken seriously, most states have ignored the calls and some of the most able to help have agreed only to minimal quotas. Yet some countries have taken a positive lead in

⁸⁴ Human Rights First, “Fact Sheet: Iraqi Refugees in Jordan and Syria.” 2007, http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/lifeline/pages.asp?country=iq&id=8&misc1=facts_country, (accessed November 3, 2008).

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, “The Human Cost of War: The Iraqi Refugee Crisis”, 2007, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/15/iraq17340.htm>, (accessed August 11, 2008).

⁸⁶ UNHCR, “Arab League launches Iraqi refugee fund-raising and awareness campaign”, January 10, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/iraq?page=press&id=478631244>, (accessed August 1, 2008).

developing resettlement opportunities. Chile recently resettled 116 Palestinians from a camp on the Iraq-Syria border, and Sudan has signed an agreement in principle with UNHCR and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to resettle some of the 2,000 Palestinian refugees currently just inside Iraq's border with Syria.⁸⁷

Sweden is the western country that has taken in the most Iraqi refugees. In 2007, 18,559 Iraqis sought asylum in Sweden, compared to 8,950 in 2006.⁸⁸ Other member States of the EU have rather focused on preventing refugees' access to their territory, including Iraqis, through the development of ever stricter border controls that do not distinguish asylum seekers from other persons arriving at the border. The new European Border Management Agency (FRONTEX) is targeting Iraqi 'illegal immigrants' and planning an operation to further prevent their irregular entry into the EU.⁸⁹ However, there are no legal routes to Europe for Iraqis fleeing persecution.⁹⁰

Today's displaced Iraqis are not viewed as sympathetically around the world as those persecuted and uprooted by the regime of Saddam Hussein. One reason is that they are seen as a problem largely of USA's making and one that the US should therefore 'fix'.⁹¹

The US promised to resettle 7,000 vulnerable Iraqis during the fiscal year of 2007, but ended up only resettling 1,608 persons. Fortunately this number went up during the fiscal year of 2008, with 13,823 Iraqis being resettled,⁹² but when one looks at the 2 million that have fled Iraq, this is still a very low number.

⁸⁷ Amnesty International, "The Wire", Vol. 38, No. 5, June 2008, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/NWS21/005/2008/en/45e0ac08-473a-11dd-858d-299ca9428acd/nws210052008eng.html>, (accessed August 4, 2008).

⁸⁸ "UNHCR criticizes Sweden's Iraqi refugee policy." *The Local*, March 18, 2008, <http://www.thelocal.se/10576/20080318/>, (accessed October 29, 2008).

⁸⁹ Frontex Public Bulletin of September 2007, p. 4, quoted in the Europeans Council on Refugees and Exiles' article "Five years on Europe is still ignoring its responsibilities towards Iraqi Refugees", March 18, 2008, p. 1, http://www.ecre.org/resources/policy_papers/1051, (accessed July 18, 2008).

⁹⁰ Pro Asyl, "The truth may be bitter, but it must be told - The Situation of Refugees in the Aegean and the Practices of the Greek Coast Guard", October 2007 & Amnesty International, "Greece: No place for an asylum-seeker", 27 February 2008, in the Europeans Council on Refugees and Exiles' article "Five years on Europe is still ignoring its responsibilities towards Iraqi Refugees", March 18, 2008, p. 1, http://www.ecre.org/resources/policy_papers/1051, (accessed July 18, 2008).

⁹¹ Cohen, Roberta, "Iraq's Displaced: Where to Turn?" *American University International Law Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 2, Fall 2008, p. 2, available from http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2008/10_iraq_cohen.aspx, (accessed October 29, 2008).

⁹² Embassy of the United States in Baghdad, Iraq, Office of the Spokesman, "U.S. Government Reaches Record for Iraqi Refugee Admission and Humanitarian Assistance in Fiscal Year 2008", October 2, 2008, http://iraq.usembassy.gov/pr_dos_10022008.html, (accessed October 15, 2008).

3.4 Arab media coverage of the Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

Most of the articles found in the Arab media have used Western news agencies as their source. In this very brief overview of the coverage of what Arab media has focused on when writing about the Iraqi refugees in Egypt, I will have my focus on the articles with Arab sources. I have looked at both international newspapers in Arabic such as *Al-Ḥayāt* and *Aš-Šarq Al-Awsaṭ*, and Egyptian newspapers such as *Al-Ahrām*, *Al-Miṣriyyūn*, *Al-Jumruhiyya* and *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*. *Al-Ahrām*'s and *Al-Jumruhiyya*'s are state-owned with their content being controlled by the Egyptian Ministry of Information, while *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm* and *Al-Miṣriyyūn* are independent newspaper, and not subject to the same control.

What is written on the Iraqi refugees in Egypt in the Arabic language can be divided roughly into three themes; firstly there are the articles about the Iraqi refugee community in Egypt generally, which mentions issues like their lack of access to education and proper health care; secondly some articles are focusing on the divide between Sunnis and Shiites and concern among Egyptians about an influx of Shiites. Thirdly, many articles written since August 2008 are concerned with the return of Iraqi refugees from Cairo to Baghdad in recent months mentioned above, and that was encouraged and paid for by the Iraqi government. Returns will be looked at in chapter 4, while the two other themes will be explained briefly here.

An article in the Arab newspaper *Aš-Šarq Al-Awsaṭ*⁹³ mentions most of the themes that frequently come up when discussing the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, and sums up their situation quite well. The number of Iraqis is given to be approximately 150,000, and 6. of October City is identified as a place where many of them have settled. Their main problems are explained to be lack of money, health problems such as mental illness and heart disease, as well as the difficulty of putting their children through school due to high fees. It is also mentioned that some Iraqis have returned to their homeland. The author reflects on the reasons, and whether it is more likely that the reason is that the Iraqis are running out of money, and not only that Iraq is safer than it has previously been. An article in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm* cited the Egyptian NGO South Centre for Human Rights when

⁹³ 'Ibrahīm, 'Abd As-Sitār, "Al-lāji'ūn al-'irāqīyyūn fī Miṣr yataḥarrakūna 'ā'idīn 'ila al-'irāq 'aw 'ila "balad thālith", *Aš-Šarq Al-Awsaṭ*, March 24, 2008, <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=463979&issueno=10709>, (accessed October 7, 2008).

claiming that the number of Iraqis in Egypt had exceeded 100,000 early in 2007.⁹⁴ The centre called on the Egyptian government to facilitate health care, housing and education to the Iraqi refugees, and to renew their visas. The centre also called on the UNHCR to provide full international protection to Iraqi refugees by strengthening the principle of *prima facie* status (which means a collective, or group status of the refugees) as well as expanding services and providing more resettlement opportunities.⁹⁵ *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*⁹⁶ also cited an article in the American newspaper *Los Angeles Times*, which states that Egyptian citizens and Iraqi refugees have a tense relationship. The article quotes an Iraqi refugee living in 6. of October City, who says that the relationship with Egyptians is bad because the Egyptians are poor and hungry, and are afraid of competition from the Iraqis. The article also cites the words of some Egyptians who says that the presence of Iraqi refugees have led to higher prices of products and real estate in the area.⁹⁷

The lack of opportunity to enrol their children in Egyptian public schools has been written about in other Egyptian newspapers, such as the independent *Al-Miṣriyyūn*, which has published an article about hundreds of Iraqi refugees demonstrating outside the Ministry of Education (Wizārat at-ta' līm) in Cairo in December 2006.⁹⁸ The refugees protested against the decision of governmental and private schools to expel their children when their visas expire. Hundreds also gathered at the Interior Ministry protesting the ministry's refusal to renew their expiring visas, which ended with security authorities asking them to leave the country.⁹⁹ Sources in the Egyptian security authorities cited in the paper said that the reason for the refusal to renew residence visas is fear of al-qā'ida elements entering Egypt amongst the refugees. Several Iraqis revealed to the journalists that they were paying thousands of dollars in bribes to Interior Ministry employees, so that they would renew their visas. Other information about Iraqi refugees in Egypt that is mentioned in this article is that the UNHCR

⁹⁴ 'Ali, Wā'il, "Markaz ḥaqīqī: 'Adad al-lāji'īn al-'irāqīyyīn 'ila Miṣr tajāwaza al 100 alf." *Al-Miṣri Al-Yawm*, March 3, 2007, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=49938>, (accessed October 6, 2008).

⁹⁵ 'Ali, Wā'il, "Wizārat at-tarbiyya taradat 'atfālahum min al-madāris.. Ad-dāxiliyya al-miṣriyya ṭarfud tajdīd iqāma 150 'alf lāji' 'irāqī wa tutālibuhum bil-muḡādara", *Al-Miṣry Al-Yawm*, March 3, 2007, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=49938>, (accessed October 6, 2008).

⁹⁶ 'Ali, Wā'il, "American Newspaper Accuses Egyptians of Mistreating Iraqi Refugees", *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, September 11, 2007, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=75751>, (accessed October 6, 2008).

⁹⁷ 'Ali, Wā'il, "American Newspaper Accuses...".

⁹⁸ *Al-Miṣriyyūn*, "Wizārat at-tarbiyya taradat 'atfālahum min al-madāris.. Ad-dāxiliyya al-miṣriyya ṭarfud tajdīd iqāma 150 'alf lāji' 'irāqī wa tuṭālibuhum bil-muḡādara", December 5, 2006, <http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=27528>, (accessed October 6, 2008).

⁹⁹ *Al-Miṣriyyūn*, "Wizārat at-tarbiyya...".

estimates their number to be over 150,000 late in 2006, and that most of the Iraqis living in Egypt are Sunni Muslims. In an article by the Arab news agency *Al-Jazīra*¹⁰⁰, the number of Iraqis in Egypt is given to be 100,000-130,000. The article also mentions that although there are over a hundred thousand Iraqis in Egypt, only about 5,000 had registered with the UNHCR by June 2007. Also mentioned is the fact that many Iraqis have settled in 6. of October City, and that this satellite city has many universities and institutions, as well as factories and companies where the Iraqis might find employment opportunities.

When looking at what is written about the relationship between Sunnis and Shiites in Egypt, it gets confusing. In some articles it is written that Shiites in Egypt (mostly coming from Iraq) have been asking the government for permission to build their own mosques in 6. of October City. However, an article in *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm* has the title “Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites: Construction of Shiite Mosques in Egypt is Just Rumors.”¹⁰¹ According to the article, an Iraqi in 6. of October City ascribes these rumors to a group of Iranians that have entered Egypt with Iraqi passports, and started to spread the rumor inside the Iraqi community.

Although this could be true (I have heard the story of Iranians obtaining Iraqi passports after the war from a couple of my interviewees), one can also imagine that Iraqi Shiites would say something like this when confronted by an Egyptian journalist. Egypt is, after all, a country with an overwhelming Sunni majority and less than one percent Shiites¹⁰², and Shiism was only accepted as a legitimate branch of Islam by Egypt’s Al-Azhar University, which is the world’s oldest Islamic seat of learning, in 1959.¹⁰³ Egyptian President Ḥusni Mubārak did not make the situation easier for Shiites when he in 2006 he spoke on Sunni-Shiite relations claiming that most Shiites are “more loyal to Iran than the Arab states in which they live.”¹⁰⁴ In the same article in *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, an Iraqi bakery owner acknowledged that some Iraqi Shiites told him that they would prefer to have mosques where they could perform their own

¹⁰⁰ Jūma, Maḥmūd, “Al-‘irāqīyyūn fī Miṣr.. Lāji’ūn bilā ṣifa”, *Al-Jazīra*, June 21, 2007, <http://www.aljazeera.net/News/archive/archive?ArchiveId=1061290>, (accessed October 7, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Yaṣīn, Marwa and Farḡali, Darīn, “Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites: Construction of Shiite Mosques in Egypt is Just Rumors”, *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, May 7, 2008. <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=112119>, (accessed November 14, 2008).

¹⁰² McGregor, Andrew, “Shaykh Qaradawi Alarms Egypt with Warning of Shiite Imperialism”, *Terrorism Focus Issue 35*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374450>, (accessed November 14, 2008).

¹⁰³ AFP, “Outrage in Egypt After Cleric Speaks Out on Sunni-Shiite Strife”, September 28, 2008, <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iO5aiG3oxaSl7Ys-PKGkqZoHHYAO>, (accessed November 14, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Mayton, Joseph, “Sunni-Shiite-Egypt Stress Lines in Cairo”, *Middle East Times*, June 16, 2008, (accessed November 14, 2008).

rituals (Shiite rituals are not allowed in Sunni mosques), and that the request to build Shiite mosques in Egypt had been made by a Shiite party visiting Egypt to attend a conference.¹⁰⁵ In an article by the Egyptian governmental newspaper *al-Jumhuriyya*'s editor Muḥammad 'Alī 'Ibrahīm published in September 2008, it is argued that the Shiite Iraqis who have settled in Egypt in recent years should be expelled. He states that if Shiism continued to spread, Egypt would meet the same fate as Lebanon and Iraq, with their sectarian violence.¹⁰⁶ That such harsh statements about Shiites are printed in a governmental newspaper, in addition the statements given by the president himself, gives some idea of what the authorities want the Egyptian people to think about their Iraqi neighbours. Unfortunately, what they are doing will probably make Egyptians more xenophobic towards Iraqis than they have been until now.

3.5 Refugees in Egypt.

Throughout history Cairo has enjoyed the status of a cosmopolitan city attracting diverse populations from across the globe. Egypt has also been seen as a place of exile by different refugee populations, including Armenians who fled the 1915 massacre under the Ottomans, Palestinians after 1948 and Sudanese after 1983.¹⁰⁷ Egypt currently hosts refugees from more than thirty countries, and while the majority of refugees in Egypt are from Sudan, there are also substantial numbers of people from Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and also from Central and West Africa. This is in addition to the Iraqi refugees that have arrived in Egypt since 2003. Estimates of the refugees in Egypt vary from 45,000¹⁰⁸ to over 3 million, although giving an accurate figure is impossible.¹⁰⁹ As mentioned above, Egypt, unlike most African countries with high numbers of refugees, does not have refugee camps, and most of the refugees live in urban areas. The majority of refugees in Egypt are concentrated in and around the capital of

¹⁰⁵ Yaşin, Marwa and Fargali, Darīn, "Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites: Construction of Shiite Mosques in Egypt is Just Rumors", *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, May 7, 2008. <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=112119>, (accessed November 14, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Egyptian Daily 'Al-Jumhuriyya' Editor: Drive the Sh'ia Out of Egypt – Before We Become Like Iraq or Lebanon", November 26, 2008, http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD213108#_edn2, (accessed December 1, 2008).

¹⁰⁷ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 287, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=Sudanese+Egypt&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed May 26, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Stack, Liam, "Trial on refugee gang murder postponed: case referred to State Security Court", *Daily News Egypt*, November 8, 2007, <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=10167>, (accessed November 19, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Harrell-Bond, Barbara, "Refugees in Egypt: Between a Rock and a Hard Place", IslamOnline.net, (Jan. 17, 2006), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077765886&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout, (accessed May 16, 2008).

Cairo, a city of more than 17 million people, while some have also settled in Alexandria, which is the second largest city in the country.¹¹⁰

The largest group of foreigners in Egypt is the Sudanese, with estimates ranging from 3 to 5 million people.¹¹¹ All of them, however, are not refugees, but have rather moved to Egypt to work. The overwhelming majority of the Sudanese in Egypt come from the Centre and North of Sudan.¹¹² The two countries have a historical relationship that has influenced the movement of both countries' citizens across the common border. Historically, large numbers of Sudanese have lived for extensive periods of time in Egypt, often going back and forth between the two countries. With the increasing movement of Sudanese refugees ever since the 1983 war in southern Sudan, Egypt has become a preferred destination.¹¹³ With the influx of southern Sudanese refugees in the mid- 1990s, the composition of the Sudanese community in Egypt changed. Many of the new arrivals were Christian, often unable to communicate in Arabic, and faced challenges interacting with Egyptian locals who are predominantly Muslim and immersed in Arab culture.¹¹⁴ Before 1995, according to the Wādī an-Nīl agreement between Sudan and Egypt, Sudanese had unrestricted access to employment, education, health services and ownership of property, similarly to citizens.¹¹⁵ Visas to enter Egypt have only been required for Sudanese since 1995, when Sudanese nationals allegedly were responsible for an attempt to assassinate the Egyptian President Mubārak.¹¹⁶ However, a new agreement referred to as the 'Four Freedoms Agreement' was signed in May 2004 and ratified in September 2004. This agreement grants reciprocal benefits to the Sudanese residing in Egypt, ostensibly guaranteeing freedom of movement, residence, work, and property. In theory, once the agreement is implemented, Sudanese will be able to enter Egypt without a visa and will be able to reside without any special permits.¹¹⁷ However, the agreement remains to be

¹¹⁰ UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 <http://www.unhcr.org/home/PUBL/474ac8d80.pdf>, (accessed May 16, 2008).

¹¹¹ UNHCR's Country Operations Plan 2008-2009 for Egypt, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, p. 1, (accessed September 16, 2008).

¹¹² UNHCR's Country Operations Plan 2008-2009 for Egypt, p. 1.

¹¹³ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo", *Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 19, No. 3*, August 2006, p. 294 of the PDF, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban...", p. 294.

¹¹⁵ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban...", p. 294.

¹¹⁶ Harrell-Bond, Barbara, "Refugees in Egypt: Between a Rock and a Hard Place", IslamOnline.net, Jan. 17, 2006, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077765886&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout, (accessed July 28, 2008).

¹¹⁷ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo", *Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 19, No. 3*, August 2006, p. 295 of the PDF, available from

effectively implemented by the Egyptian government, and remains without much relevance to the Sudanese residing in the country. As the Sudanese is the biggest refugee group in Cairo, some comparisons between Sudanese and Iraqi refugees will be attempted in chapter 4 (4.10).

3.6 Egypt's Policies Concerning Refugees.

Article 53 of the Egyptian Constitution states that; "Egypt is obliged to grant the right of political asylum to any foreigner who has been persecuted for his defence of the interest of people, or of human rights, peace or justice". Yet this right seems mainly reserved for a few high-level individuals that have benefited from this provision in the past, including the Shah of Iran, Jāfaj Nimeiri of Sudan, and the wife of the last king of Libya.¹¹⁸ No refugees residing in Egypt have the right to acquire citizenship since nationality is granted on the basis of descent (*ius sanguinis*). This affects the registration of children born to refugees without legal status, who are unable to approach their embassy.¹¹⁹

Egypt has yet to take concrete steps towards the adoption of domestic refugee legislation and to put in place the necessary arrangements for the reception and registration of refugee applicants and determination of their refugee status.¹²⁰ Still, Egypt is a signatory to several international agreements, including the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Thus Egypt has undertaken international obligations with regard to providing asylum, protection, and guaranteeing rights for refugees on its territory.¹²¹ However, when signing the 1951 Convention, Egypt entered reservations some of the articles. The five reservations made to the Convention concern personal status (art. 12 (1)), rationing (art. 20), access to primary education (art. 22 (1)), access to public relief and assistance (art. 22), and labour legislation and social security (art. 24). As a result, refugee

<http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹¹⁸ Harrell-Bond, Barbara and Zohry, Ayman, "Contemporary Egyptian Migration: An Overview of Voluntary and Forced Migration", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo, (issued by the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, December 2003), http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers/WP-C3.pdf, (accessed May 19, 2008).

¹¹⁹ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 2006, p. 292 of the PDF, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹²⁰ UNHCR Country Operations Plan for Egypt 2007. <http://www.irefugees.org/articles/background/egypt.pdf>, (accessed May 19, 2008).

¹²¹ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo & Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, Brighton UK, July 2006, p. 17, http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/research_reports/Kasia_Egypt_Research_ReportEDITED.pdf, (accessed May 16, 2008).

children are restricted in their rights to state-funded education, and the right to work is regulated by Egypt's domestic legislation concerning the employment of foreigners, law no. 137 of 1981, whereby refugees are required to obtain a work permit as any other foreigner in the country.¹²² To do so, they must meet strict criteria, including sponsorship by an employer, legal residence and travel documents, proof of specialized skills that do not put them in competition with Egyptian workers, HIV tests, and the payment of processing fees.¹²³

The need for refugees to obtain a work permit, and the practical impossibility of obtaining them, makes the informal sector the only area where refugees can find work.

A 2004 decree in the issue of work permits exempted "political refugees" (in the narrow sense of the constitution), those born in the country, and Palestinians from the non-competition restriction. The 2004 decree, however, also restricted professions to Egyptians unless the regulations of a profession allowed exceptions, and excluded foreigners from work in the export and import sectors, custom clearance, and tourism.¹²⁴ Egypt do not allow reciprocal licensing of Iraqi doctors as it did Jordanians, instead they have to complete in-hospital training and licensing examinations and often have at less-qualified positions. A 2006 decree restricted earlier liberalization of work permits for domestic workers, requiring the personal approval of the Minister and limiting them to "cases necessary by humanitarian, social or practical circumstances. The 2003 Labour Law also excluded domestic workers from its protections.¹²⁵

A policy issue open to exploration, however, is Article 17 of the UN Convention, to which Egypt did not enter any reservations. Article 17 (1) states that "The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstances, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment."

¹²² Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, July 2006, p. 17, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 9, 2008).

¹²³ Azzam, F, "A Tragedy of Failures and False Expectations: Report on the Events Surrounding the Three-month Sit-in and Forced Removal of Sudanese Refugees in Cairo, September-December 2005", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, June 2006, p. 12, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 13, 2008).

¹²⁴ U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Country Report for Egypt 2008,

¹²⁵ U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Country Report for Egypt 2008.

Another convention to which Egypt is a signatory is the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which in article 28 states that children have the right to free access to education, and to which the Egyptian government has not made any reservations.¹²⁶

Egypt is also a signatory to the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems. As mentioned above when discussing the term ‘refugee’, this Convention expands the definition of the UN Convention to include persons who, “owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.”¹²⁷

At the regional level, there is no Arab instrument of relevance that is applied in domestic law. Neither the 1994 Arab Refugee Convention nor the Arab Charter on Human Rights adopted in 2004 came into force due to the very low number of signatories. Egypt has signed the 1994 Convention, but so far no states have ratified it. The most important reason why Arab states are reluctant to adopt a regional refugee regime is the highly politicized issue of the Palestinians.¹²⁸ This is also the case for Egypt, where approximately 50,000 Palestinian refugees are living. In an interview, an official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry used the Palestinians as an example when explaining to me why the Egyptian government are not interested in Iraqi refugees (or any other refugee group for that matter) integrating into Egyptian society: “We are not encouraging Iraqi refugees to integrate in Egypt, although we don’t forbid it either. Refugees are allowed to marry Egyptians, and many do. But if the Iraqis were given the opportunity to integrate here, what would we do with the Palestinians? You know there are 50,000 Palestinians in Egypt. And what would we do with the Sudanese?”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”, (November 20. 1989), <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>, (accessed May 16. 2008).

¹²⁷ Organization of African Unity, “Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa”, Art. 1.2, September 10. 1969, http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/Refugee_Convention.pdf, (accessed May 16. 2008).

¹²⁸ Badawy and Khalil 2005 in Grabska, Katarzyna: “Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt”, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo, (July 2006), http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/research_reports/Kasia_Egypt_Research_ReportEDITED.pdf, (accessed May 13. 2008)

¹²⁹ Personal contact, March 25. 2008.

Egypt has laws making it hard for anyone to form organizations that also make the situation more difficult for refugees in the country. This started in 1967 when the late president Nāṣir (Nasser), for security reasons, signed an Emergency Law making it illegal for more than five people to gather in public. The Emergency Law was renewed in October 1981 after the assassination of President Sādāt, and has been extended many times since then.¹³⁰ It was extended once again in May 2008 for another two year period, despite promises from President Mubārak to abolish it during his campaign for the presidential elections in 2005. The law imposes restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, movement, or residence. It gives police the power to arrest and detain suspects or those deemed dangerous, as well as the power to search individuals and places without the need to follow the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.¹³¹ Also, in June 2002, a new law on non-governmental organizations entered into force. Under this law, the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs requires all NGOs to register and be approved. In addition, organizations cannot receive funds from abroad, nor affiliate with international organizations without ministry approval. Above all, the ministry can dissolve an NGO at will.

When looking at the international agreements to which Egypt is a signatory it is clear that, even considering the reservations made to the 1951 Convention, Egypt is not living up to its obligations regarding refugees.

3.7 Durable solutions for Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

As mentioned above, UNHCR operates with three so-called “durable solutions” for refugees, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement to a third country.

In international human rights law, the basic principle of voluntary repatriation is the right to return to one’s own country.¹³² Currently, voluntary repatriation is considered the most desirable solution by UNHCR, followed by local integration and lastly: resettlement.¹³³

For Iraqis, UNHCR will promote return when conditions are conducive to organized voluntary return movements under conditions of physical, legal and material safety.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Anghelddu, Sara, “No Associations for Iraqis”, Iraqi Voices in Cairo, May 17, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/noassociation.html>, (accessed October 21, 2008).

¹³¹ Anghelddu, Sara, “No Associations...”.

¹³² UNHCR, “Handbook: Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection”, (Geneva, 1996), <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3bfe68d32.pdf>, (accessed May 18, 2008).

¹³³ Shafie, Sherifa, “Durable Solutions for Refugees. Case Study: Egypt”, MA Dissertation, Refugee Studies, University of East London, September 2006. (found at the AUC Library, October 2007).

¹³⁴ “UNHCR Iraq Situation Supplementary Appeal 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/PARTNERS/477b8f744.pdf>, p. 6. (accessed May 18, 2008).

However, this does not seem to be probable in the foreseeable future. Pending a major improvement of conditions in Iraq which would allow large-scale repatriation, resettlement will remain an important durable solution for the most vulnerable Iraqis.¹³⁵

Eleven distinct eligibility criteria for resettlement have been established by the UNHCR for Iraqi refugees. These include victims of severe trauma, detention, abduction in the country of origin; membership of minority groups targeted in the country of origin; women at risk in country of asylum; unaccompanied or separated minors; dependants in resettlement countries; older persons at risk; medical cases without treatment in country of asylum; high-profile cases and/or family members; Iraqis who have fled because of their associations with specific governmental, military or intergovernmental groups; and stateless persons and those of in risk of immediate *refoulement* (forcibly being returned to Iraq).¹³⁶

As of May 18, 2007, some 5,894 Iraqi refugees had been formally submitted for resettlement by the UNHCR. Of these only 94 were submitted from their Cairo office.¹³⁷ The UNHCR recognizes that 20,000, the total number of Iraqis the organization is planning to submit for resettlement during 2007, only amount to a small proportion of the greater Iraqi refugee population. Nevertheless, in the context of Iraq, resettlement will remain a significant option in protecting women-at-risk and in addressing specific vulnerabilities of a medical or social nature that cannot be addressed effectively in the countries of asylum in the region.¹³⁸

Other options for resettlement are through Canada's private sponsorship, Australia's Humanitarian Program, or, especially for Iraqis, through the United State's Direct Access Program. Refugees can apply directly through Canada's or Australia's embassies in Cairo, or, for resettlement to the U.S., through the International Organization for Migration (IOM). IOM works together with the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) preparing the cases of Iraqi refugees. In Jordan and Egypt, direct access (without having to be referred from the UNHCR) through USRAP has been available from February 2008 to direct-hire employees of the US Mission in Iraq and other Iraqis who worked for the U.S. government or their

¹³⁵ "UNHCR Iraq Situation Supplementary Appeal 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/PARTNERS/477b8f744.pdf>, p. 7, (accessed May 18. 2008).

¹³⁶ Cochetel, Vincent, "Resettlement", in *Forced Migration Review*, Iraq Special Issue, Oxford June 2007, <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/Iraq/full.pdf>, p. 21, (accessed May 19. 2008).

¹³⁷ Cochetel, Vincent, "Resettlement", p. 21.

¹³⁸ Cochetel, Vincent, "Resettlement", p. 22.

contractors, or for U.S.-based media organisations or non-governmental organisations.¹³⁹

Prior to February 2008, the Direct Access Program was only available to interpreters who had worked on a full-time basis for the U.S. government or multinational forces in Iraq.¹⁴⁰

When I interviewed Hassan he had registered with the UNHCR, and was hoping for resettlement to a western country. He had also tried to be resettled directly through the International Organization for Migration (IOM), but had just received the news that he was not eligible for resettlement to the U.S. Hassan was a member of the Baath Party in Iraq, and was in the army when the Americans invaded the country. In his letter from IOM it was explained that he was not eligible for resettlement because he had been prosecuting people in Iraq for their religious affiliations or ethnicity, but Hassan could not understand how IOM could come to this conclusion. He said again and again that IOM ought to focus on his current situation, and not what had happened in Iraq in 2003. He did not seem to fully understand how much his affiliation with the Baath party was affecting his chances for resettlement to the US. According to Mike Kagan, a senior fellow in human rights law at the American University in Cairo, the U.S. government does not judge Iraqis on a case-by-case basis. Instead they make broad generalizations about an applicant's involvement with the Iraqi government before the 2003 invasion. Any association with Saddam Hussein's Baath Party or the Iraqi army can result (as Hassan said it did for him), in an automatic exclusion from resettlement in the United States.¹⁴¹ However, Hassan more than once during the interview gave me a clear impression of his hostile feelings towards the country to which he was trying to get resettled. I of course do not know whether he gave the same impression to the employees at IOM when they interviewed him there, and I do believe that he, during the interview with me, vented some of the frustration he felt having been denied resettlement.

The last durable solution is local integration in the country of asylum. In the view of the United Nations this is a process with three interrelated dimensions. First, there is a legal process, where refugees are granted a wider range of rights and entitlements by the host state. Under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention, these include, for example, the right to seek

¹³⁹ U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance for Refugees and Internally Displaced Iraqis", Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesman, April 15, 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/apr/103623.htm>, (accessed May 16, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ Personal contact with IOM official in Cairo, March 23, 2008.

¹⁴¹ Kasinof, Laura, "Iraqis who worked for Army denied U.S. entry", San Francisco Chronicle July 27, 2008. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/27/MN4711IPDE.DTL>, (accessed October 22, 2008).

employment, to own property, and to have access to public services such as education. Second, it can also be regarded as an economic process. In acquiring more rights, refugees also improve their potential to establish sustainable livelihoods, and to become less reliant on humanitarian assistance. Third, local integration is a social process, enabling refugees to live amongst the host population without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by the authorities or the people of the host country. It is consequently a process that involves both refugees and the host population.¹⁴²

As a host society, Egypt has numerous problems which prevent the country from integrating refugees within its borders. According to the UNDP Human Development Index, Egypt is categorized as a lower middle-income country. It was ranked 112 out of 177 countries in 2007/2008, coming below the Occupied Palestinian Territories as well as countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua.¹⁴³ In addition, the majority of Iraqi refugees in Cairo are from the middle class, and are not likely to integrate easily in a country where the vast majority are poor.¹⁴⁴ Local integration in Egypt for Iraqi refugees is also effectively ruled out as an option by the government through Egypt's reservations to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. Arab countries with a high influx face a dilemma in regard to Arab refugees, and this is well explained by Patricia Weiss Fagen: "On the one hand, the tradition of 'Arab brotherhood' provides a political and moral imperative to accept Iraqis in need of a refuge; on the other, there is a strong determination not to establish arrangements that might lead to permanence that deters the host countries from offering a more secure refuge:"¹⁴⁵

What we can talk about instead of integration is local settlement, as mentioned above, where the refugees may be settled in a host society, but are isolated spatially and marginalized

¹⁴² Crisp, Jeff, "The Local Integration and Local Settlement of Refugees: A Conceptual and Historical Analysis", New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper No. 102, UNHCR April 2004, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=407d3b762&page=research>, (accessed May 19, 2008).

¹⁴³ United Nations Development Program's Human Development Reports 2007/2008, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>, (accessed October 3, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ Angheleddu, Sara, "A Better Place to Live", Iraqi Voices in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, the American University in Cairo March 20, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/betterplacetolive.html>, (accessed May 20, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Fagen, Patricia Weiss, "Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan", Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University and Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2007, p. 5, <http://isim.georgetown.edu/Publications/PatPubs/Iraqi%20Refugees.pdf>, (accessed August 7, 2008).

economically and legally,¹⁴⁶ hence not having any real chance of real integration into the Egyptian society.

¹⁴⁶ Kibreab 1989:469 in Al-Sharmani, Mulki, "Livelihood and Identity Constructions of Somali Refugees in Cairo", Forces Migration and Refugee Studies Programme at the American University in Cairo, Working Paper No. 2, July 2003, p. 4, can be found at <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

4. Research findings: Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

4.1 Where do they live?

The Iraqis in Cairo have mainly settled in two areas: 6. of October City (Medīnat Sitta Oktōber), a newly built satellite city a 20 minute drive southwest of Cairo's city centre, and Nasr City (Medīnat Naṣr), a suburb east of central Cairo. Some have also settled in poorer neighbourhoods, such as Fayṣal in the Giza district. Iraqis give different reasons for choosing these neighbourhoods. Reasons that came up during interviews was the wish to get away from the noise and pollution of Cairo's city centre (while most of the refugees are from the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, this city is explained to me as having more of a small town feel with no tall buildings, quite different from the metropolis of Cairo), living close to fellow Iraqis (especially family members), and the hope of being more invisible to the Egyptian authorities than they believe they would be if they lived inside the borders of Cairo proper. In addition to this, the existence of many private schools and universities, in addition to many factories and companies where it is, at least in theory, possible to get a job for Iraqis is an important reason why so many choose to settle there.

4.2 Who are the Iraqi refugees in Cairo?

Egypt is the third most popular destination for Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers since 2003, after Syria and Jordan. The UNHCR estimates that there are 1.4 million Iraqis in Syria, and 450,000 - 500,000 in Jordan.¹⁴⁷ There are also an estimated 55,000 Iraqis in Iran, 40,000-50,000 in Lebanon, 10,000 in Turkey and 200,000 in the Gulf countries, although these numbers are not possible to verify.¹⁴⁸ As mentioned, researchers from the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program (FMRS)¹⁴⁹ at the American University in Cairo (AUC) are currently collaborating with the Information and Decision Support Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet of Ministers (IDSC) to conduct the first statistical assessment of Iraqis in Egypt, but at current time (December 2008) it has not yet been published.¹⁵⁰ Although it is not possible to give the exact number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, according to different sources there are

¹⁴⁷ United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, "Jordan – Facts and Figures", May 22. 2008, <http://ochaonline.un.org/CERFaroundtheWorld/Jordan2008/tabid/4603/Default.aspx>, (accessed May 31. 2008).

¹⁴⁸ Ferris, Elisabeth, "Regional Dimensions to the Iraqi Displacement Crisis and the Role of the United Nations", *Brookings Institution*, October 25, 2007, http://www.brookings.edu/speeches/2007/1025_iraq_ferris.aspx, (accessed August 1, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ The Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program recently changed name to Center for Migration and Refugee Studies.

¹⁵⁰ Research Projects/Affiliations, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/resaffil/Pages/ResearchProjects.aspx>, (accessed April 15. 2008)

between 40,000 and 150,000 currently living in the country. An official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry estimated the number to be 120,000 in March 2008.¹⁵¹ The question of counting refugees, and the ways in which this task is complicated by politics, is never more evident than in urban areas. As mentioned, the hidden nature of urban refugees makes it very difficult to make estimates about their numbers, and each source has its own agenda and set of reasons for the number it puts out.¹⁵² In addition the number also changes constantly, with new refugees entering the country (although this is currently very difficult for Iraqis), and others leaving it.

In the end of 2005 only some 250 Iraqis were registered with the office of UNHCR in Egypt. By the end of 2006, that number had gone up to 3,000 and by September 2007 some 10,000 Iraqis were registered with the office.¹⁵³ 'Abīr 'Aṭīfa, spokesperson at the regional office of UNHCR in Cairo, gave the number of Iraqi refugees registered with the organization's Cairo office to be 10,500 in December 2007. At this time Iraqis constituted 24 percent of the people of concern for UNHCR in Egypt.¹⁵⁴

The Iraqi refugees coming to Egypt are mainly from the middle class, and are well educated.¹⁵⁵ It has been estimated that as much as 40 per cent of the middle class in Iraq has fled the country since 2003.¹⁵⁶ Of the Iraqis interviewed for this paper, 10 of the 13 had higher education from a college or university. This finding is confirmed by statements from Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond, who explains that "Iraqis in Cairo are primarily well-educated, middle-class people, many of whom are professionals. They are here because they have been targeted by militias from both factions of the war who try to kill them because they worked for Americans or coalition forces, or kidnap them for ransom because they have money."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Personal contact with an official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, March 2008.

¹⁵² Jacobsen, Karen, "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A livelihoods Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol 19, No. 3, 2006, Oxford University Press, p. 275, <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/273>, (accessed May 18, 2008).

¹⁵³ UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 <http://www.unhcr.org/home/PUBL/474ac8d80.pdf>, (accessed June 15, 2008).

¹⁵⁴ Personal contact with 'Abīr 'Aṭīfa at UNHCR Cairo, December 2007.

¹⁵⁵ Personal contact with Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond, October 2007.

¹⁵⁶ Lochhead, Carolyn, "Conflict in Iraq. Iraqi Refugee Crisis Exploding", San Francisco Chronicle, January 16, 2007, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/01/16/MNG2MNJBIS1.DTL>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

¹⁵⁷ Bancroft, Carolyn, "Becoming a Refugee", Iraqis in Egypt, March 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/becomingarefugee.html>, (accessed May 16, 2008).

The majority of the Iraqis I met during the fieldwork were from Baghdad or close to Baghdad. Only one family I encountered was from another region of Iraq, namely from the city of Kirkuk in the northern part of the country. Thus all of the people I interviewed come from urban centres in Iraq. Researchers have found this to be the case for Iraqis in other Arab countries as well.¹⁵⁸

Although there are no statistics available, Iraqis in Egypt certainly include both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, and probably also people with other religious views. Some have estimated that the majority of Iraqis in Egypt are Sunni Muslims.¹⁵⁹ When asked about their religious affiliation the Iraqis interviewed for this paper all gave the same response; "We are all Iraqis, it doesn't matter if you're Sunni or Shi'a", yet during conversations they often openly revealed their religious affiliation. Of my 13 interviewees, 12 were Sunni Muslims, while one was Shi'a..

Most of the Iraqis currently in Egypt arrived after the bombings of the al-'Askarī Mosque in Sāmra' (Samarra), Iraq on February 22, 2006. This attack marked an escalation in sectarian violence between Iraq's Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Another reason for the influx into Egypt in 2006 was increasing difficulties obtaining a visa to Jordan. All the Iraqis I interviewed arrived in Egypt during 2006. Registrations of Iraqis at the office of UNHCR in Cairo also went up significantly in this period, from 251 persons in 2005, to 3020 persons in 2006.¹⁶⁰

Of the Iraqis registered with UNHCR's regional office in Cairo by November 2007, some 47 percent are female and 53 percent are male, while 41 percent of the registered Iraqi refugees are children under the age of 18. As noted above, many Iraqis in Egypt have chosen not to register with UNHCR in order to gain official refugee status. Although most estimates of Iraqis in Egypt are over 100,000, as previously mentioned, only 10,500 had registered with UNHCR by December 2007.¹⁶¹ According to an employee at the UNHCR, Iraqi refugees usually do not approach their office in order to be resettled in another country. "Many Iraqis

¹⁵⁸ Tanner, Victor; Hoffman, Sophia & al-Khalidi, Ashraf, "Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot", The Brookings Institution – University of Bern, an occasional paper, June 2007, p. 11, available from http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/0611humanrights_al-khalidi.aspx, (accessed October 13, 2008), and FAFO, UNFPA and the Government of Jordan, "Iraqis in Jordan: Their Number and Characteristics", May 2007, p. 17, available from <http://www.ncciraq.org/spip.php?article2092>, (accessed October 13, 2008).

¹⁵⁹ *Al-Miṣriyyūn*, "Wizārat aṭ-ṭarbiyya taradat 'atfālahum min al-madāris.. Ad-dāxiliyya al-miṣriyya tarfuḍ tajdīd iqāmat 150 alf lājī 'irāqī: wa tutālibuhum bil-muḡādara", December 5, 2006, <http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=27528>, (accessed October 6, 2008).

¹⁶⁰ Personal contact with 'Abīr 'Aṭīfa at UNHCR in Cairo, December 2007.

¹⁶¹ Personal contact with UNHCR, December 2007.

think they will stay for four or five months until everything is quite good and then they would go back to their homes. This is a very big mistake, because they start to live the same way they used to live in their home country and after a few months, they are running out of money and they start to face hard reality.”¹⁶² An official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry explained the refusal to register with having to do with Iraqis not wanting to see themselves as refugees; “They are proud people, and they do not want to be looked at as refugees”.¹⁶³ Even though this is probably part of the reason, all of the respondents for this paper had registered with the UNHCR, and they all explained that they did so in hopes of being resettled to a third country.

Some of the refugees were able to bring investment money from Iraq to start a business while waiting out the war. The form of business usually chosen by foreign investors is the Limited Liability Company, known as WLL (With Limited Liability) which requires a minimum capital of LE 50,000. For a company offering its shares to the public, the minimum capital is LE 500,000, whereas for a closed company not offering its shares for public subscription, the capital should be at least LE 250,000.¹⁶⁴ Of the respondents for this paper, two of them had brought with them money to open businesses in Cairo.

Ḥassan, a 36 year old man from Baghdad, was planning to start a business with an Egyptian acquaintance when he arrived in Cairo. Ḥassan gave his money to his Egyptian partner for him to take care of, while he went back to Iraq to sell off the rest of his belongings and bring more money with him to invest in the business. However, when he returned to Cairo two weeks later, his Egyptian partner had disappeared with the money, and no one could (or would) tell him where he and his family had gone to. Ḥassan had a big dislike for Egyptians after this episode, and did not want to have any contact with any of them if he could help it.

On the other hand Fāṭima, a 40 year old widow living in 6. of October City, opened up a salon and worked as a hairdresser after arriving in Egypt. She managed to keep the salon open for six months, but then had to close because she didn’t make any profit. Now she and her only child live off savings she brought from Iraq, but they are about to run out. They do not receive remittances from anyone, and the help they get from UNHCR and their implementing partner

¹⁶² UNHCR official quoted in Bancroft, Caloryn, “Becoming a Refugee”, Iraqi Voices in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, March 12, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/becomingarefugee.html>, (accessed May 20, 2008).

¹⁶³ Personal contact, March 2008.

¹⁶⁴ Cugusi, Laura, “Just a Matter of Time”, Iraqi Voices in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, April 22, 2008, <http://www.iraqisinegypt.org/matteroftime.html>, (accessed May 20, 2008).

is not enough. With assistance from UNHCR through Catholic Relief Services to pay school fees, her son is now attending a private school in 6. of October City, but they probably won't have the money to let him continue another school year.

4.3 Why Egypt?

An important element that makes Egypt an attractive destination for refugees is the existence of one of the largest resettlement programs in the world, both through the regional office of the UNHCR and the private sponsorship programs of Canada, Australia, the U.S., and Finland.¹⁶⁵ When asked why Egypt was the choice of destination when fleeing Iraq, the interviewees all mentioned the cost of living as one of the main factors. Another reason for choosing Egypt was that it was still relatively easy to get into the country when most of them fled Iraq (during 2006). This changed early in 2007, when the Egyptian authorities began imposing new procedures for Iraqis seeking entry. Before January 2007, Iraqis could obtain a tourist visa through travel agents in Baghdad, who would then take their passports to the Egyptian consulates in Damascus or Amman for processing. Since then, however, the Egyptian authorities are requiring face-to-face interviews with at least one family member at their consulate, and the numbers dropped significantly because the Iraqis could not get to Syria or Jordan. Since Egypt does not have a diplomatic post in Baghdad, it is now virtually impossible for Iraqis to obtain a visa for Egypt.¹⁶⁶

One example of this is Muḥammad, who has applied for family reunification five times to get his father to Egypt. Muḥammad lives in an apartment in Nasr City with his mother and two brothers. His father is still in Baghdad, but wants to come to Cairo to be with his family. Muhammad's appeal for his father to come, however, has been rejected by the Egyptian authorities all five times. Muḥammad lived in Jordan for seven months before moving on to Egypt, and told me that he is better treated in Egypt than he was in Jordan. He worked in a hotel in Amman for four months, but he gave it up because of problems with his colleagues. He was also offered a job as a street vendor, but being a highly educated man and still having savings brought from Iraq, he did not want to take it. The job had a very low salary, and he did not think it was worth it at the time.

¹⁶⁵Grabska, Katarzyna "Living on the Margins: Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt," Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper 6, June 2005, p. 4, available at AUC.

¹⁶⁶Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: from a Flood to a Trickle: Egypt", April 2007, http://hrw.org/backgrounder/refugees/iraq0407/4.htm#_Toc164487349 (accessed May 16, 2008).

Living in Jordan, he had to leave the country every month to renew his residence visa, which was both expensive and time consuming. His mother, who left for Egypt before him, asked him to come to Cairo, and told him that Egyptians are friendlier towards Iraqis than the Jordanians are. Iraqis I have talked to explain this friendliness by referring to the many Egyptian migrant workers that used to live in Iraq in the 1980s, sending money home to their families in Egypt. “Earlier millions of Egyptians lived in Iraq and made good money. Now it’s their turn to help us”, is a phrase used by most of my interviewees. This explanation is confirmed by an official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, stating that “you know there used to live many Egyptians in Iraq, making money to send back to their families. This is our chance to return the favour, and we are happy to do it”.¹⁶⁷

Fāṭima lived in several other countries before arriving in Egypt. After her husband died in a car explosion in Iraq, she took her only child with her and fled first to Jordan. There she stayed only for one month, being unable to renew her residence visa. She then travelled to Syria, where she stayed for about five months before she was able to land a job in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a teacher. She had previously lived in UAE with her husband, and was pleased that she was able to get a job so that she could make some money for herself and her child. However, after three months she was unable to renew her visa, and had to leave the country. She decided to travel to Egypt, having a brother there that was able to get her a temporary residence visa. Currently she has a yellow asylum seeker card obtained at the office of UNHCR, and has a case pending with the IOM, hoping to be resettled to the West as soon as possible.

4.4 Service providers for Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

The predominant feature of assistance to refugees in Egypt is that it is delivered by either churches or NGOs (some of which are UNHCR ‘implementing partners’) who receive financial support from international sources or by refugee-based NGOs who are largely self-funded. Egyptian NGOs have not been prominent in providing refugee assistance.¹⁶⁸

In recent years, the number of organizations providing some assistance for refugees has increased significantly. Most of them are created by refugees themselves; however, due to the fluid nature of refugee populations as well as problems with raising funds, many of these

⁸ Personal contact at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, March 25, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Ismail, Iman, “Coordinating Humanitarian Aid for Refugees in Egypt”, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, 2001, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 17, 2008).

organizations are rather short-lived. The majority of programmes operated by NGOs and faith-based organizations are not directly linked to helping people increase their livelihoods while in Egypt, but are more focused on either meeting people's immediate needs or helping them prepare for resettlement or eventual return to their home country.¹⁶⁹

Refugees coming to Egypt face an absence of reliable sources of information, and they often do not know what assistance is available, and who can get it. This is partly due to the size and density of Cairo, but it also points to the failure of UNHCR, the government of Egypt, and NGOs to provide clear and accessible information on what is available, of how it can be accessed, and of who qualifies.¹⁷⁰ When I asked Iraqi refugees about how they obtained information on services, most mentioned UNHCR and family members as their only sources, and they often had not heard about other service providers than UNHCR's implementing partners. Many of the refugees asked me what I knew about service providers, and wanted to know where they could get assistance. From this it is clear that information about services attainable for refugees should be more accessible, and given not only at the office of UNHCR, as many refugees never register with them. Work is currently being done in this area, with an intern at IOM researching how best to reach the refugees, and providing them with information in the main areas where refugees live.¹⁷¹ A report on the providing of health care information to refugees in Cairo was also written in 2005 at the American University in Cairo¹⁷², yet this is only a small beginning of the work that needs to be done in this regard.

The Government of Egypt does not provide any financial support to the refugees in the country. The Government's contribution has focused only on territorial protection by issuing a six month renewable residency stamp on UNHCR's blue (refugee) and yellow (asylum

¹⁶⁹ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, July 2006, p. 27-28, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 9, 2008).

¹⁷⁰ Azzam, F, "A Tragedy of Failures and False Expectations: Report on the Events Surrounding the Three-month Sit-in and Forced Removal of Sudanese Refugees in Cairo, September – December 2005", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo, June 2006, p. 16, http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/fmrs/reports/Documents/Report_Edited_v.pdf, (accessed May 16, 2008).

¹⁷¹ Interview with Craig Murphy at IOM, March 29, 2008.

¹⁷² Eidenier, Emily K, "Providing Health Care Information to Refugees in Cairo: Questions of Access and Integration", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, May 2005, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 13, 2008).

seeker) cards. This allows refugees and asylum seekers to stay legally in Egypt.¹⁷³ Besides this, the Egyptian government does not do anything to better the situation of refugees in the country.

The organization of most importance for refugees entering Egypt will have to be the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose offices are now located in 6. of October City a 20 minute drive from Cairo's city centre. The organization's office was until 2007 located near the city centre, but have since been moved. While the new location might be good for the many Iraqis living in 6. of October City, it is a big disadvantage for other refugee groups and Iraqis living in other parts of Cairo, having to travel there from their homes around the city and spend money on bus tickets or taxis.

UNHCR has had for many years a sizable assistance program for refugees in Egypt to help them meet their basic human needs. In recent years however, the refugee population has increased so drastically as to put UNHCR's assistance programme under tremendous pressure. As a result assistance is now provided only to the most vulnerable cases. With the limited funds available, UNHCR provides assistance to only 20 percent of the total caseload.¹⁷⁴ UNHCR's operations in Egypt are one of the organization's largest and oldest urban refugee programmes in the world. It is based on a cooperation agreement with the Government of Egypt from 1954, and essentially results in UNHCR carrying the main responsibilities for asylum-seekers and refugees, with services ranging from registration, documentation and refugee status determination (RSD), to catering for the basic needs of an ever growing refugee population.¹⁷⁵ Since it is the UNHCR that are carrying out RSD interviews, when Iraqis in Egypt decide to apply for refugee status, they must register at their office. Egyptian authorities were supposed to take over the responsibility of RSD interviews in 2002¹⁷⁶, but nothing has changed until today and UNHCR still finds itself in the situation of having to assist refugees and determine their legal status at the same time.

¹⁷³ UNHCR, "2007 Arab Republic of Egypt Country Operations Plan", p. 7, <http://www.irefugees.org/articles/background/egypt.pdf>, (accessed May 20. 2008).

¹⁷⁴ UNHCR Country Operations Plan for the Arab Republic of Egypt 2007, <http://www.irefugees.org/articles/background/egypt.pdf>, p. 3, (accessed May 18. 2008).

¹⁷⁵ UNHCR Country Operations Plan 2008-2009 for Egypt, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search&results=web&query=egypt>, (accessed October 23. 2008).

¹⁷⁶ Sperl, Stefan, "Evaluation of UNHCR's policy on refugees in urban areas: A case study review of Cairo", United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, June 2001, p. 11, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed October 10, 2008).

Iraqis from the south and central parts of the country are registered by UNHCR as *prima facie* refugees, and are automatically given temporary protection.¹⁷⁷ In this process UNHCR avoids conducting intensive individual RSD by granting protection collectively to a group of refugees, without a complete individual evaluation for each case.¹⁷⁸ Persons from the northern parts of Iraq however, are considered on a case-by-case basis through individual RSD interviews.¹⁷⁹ UNHCR gives Iraqis a yellow card, implying they are asylum-seekers, and that they can stay in the country without fear of *refoulement* (forcibly being sent back to their home country) until official status is determined. The Iraqis then have to take their yellow card to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and after that to the Mugamm'a, the building in Cairo containing offices for residency and citizenship. Here they receive a 6 month renewable residency stamp on their yellow asylum seeker card. Hence, most Iraqis are considered asylum-seekers by the Egyptian government, as most of them have not been through an individual RSD interview. Yet officials at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry still refer to all Iraqis in Egypt as refugees, then meaning both registered and unregistered Iraqis.

All Iraqis I interviewed, including a family from the north of Iraq, had yellow cards from UNHCR, although most had not gone through the process of getting the proper residency stamp from the Egyptian authorities, as they felt they did not need it.

Another organization especially important for Iraqis in Egypt is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons.¹⁸⁰ In Egypt IOM mostly works with preparing cases for resettlement to the United States. IOM, as an advocacy organization, has no control over who is allowed to enter the US. They work with obtaining all the relevant information about the applicants and deliver this information to the American immigration officers (judges) that arrive irregularly in Egypt. When in Cairo, the immigration officers

¹⁷⁷ UNHCR, "Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees", March 12. 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=45f80f9d2>, (accessed May 16. 2008).

¹⁷⁸ Kagan, Michael, "Assessment of Refugee Status Determination Procedure at UNHCR's Cairo Office 2001-2002", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 1, American University in Cairo, December 2002, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 15, 2008).

¹⁷⁹ El Sayed, Nadine, "No Home Away From Home." *Egypt Today: the Magazine of Egypt*. <http://www.egypttoday.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=7844>, (accessed March 21. 2008).

conduct one last interview with the applicants, and then decide whether the applicant is eligible for resettlement to the US or not. The immigration officers are not based in Egypt, but travel around the world conducting interviews, and they are more often in Jordan's capital Amman than in Cairo. The number of Iraqis seeking help from IOM has been increasing, so that they in March 2008 constituted the majority of IOM's caseloads in Cairo.¹⁸¹

The shortest possible time from when a person applies for resettlement through IOM until she/he arrives in the US was about 6 months in late March 2008.¹⁸² IOM must verify the information given by the applicant, and this information sometime takes a very long time to confirm. In some instances it is impossible to obtain this information at all, and the applicant cannot be resettled.

Also very important for Iraqi refugees, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) (an implementing partner of UNHCR) is the only organization giving out money to pay school fees for refugee children. The organization does not work exclusively for refugees, but also have programs focusing on providing villages with clean water and sanitation, encouraging democracy, and giving loans to women to develop small home-based businesses.¹⁸³

Many of the service providers to refugees in Cairo are churches. Refuge Egypt, another implementing partner of UNHCR, provides emergency assistance, self-reliance programmes (including training and job placement), as well as medical assistance through their own clinic. Another church, the Sacred Heart Church in Sakakīni, runs a major educational programme for refugee children, provides relief, medical assistance, and space for socializing and cultural events.¹⁸⁴

I was surprised that I could not find any Islamic organizations or mosques that specifically aim at helping refugees. I asked service providers, researchers and refugees themselves about this, but no one knew of any mosques targeting refugees.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Craig Murphy at IOM, March 29, 2008.

¹⁸² Interview with Craig Murphy at IOM, March 29, 2008.

¹⁸³ Catholic Relief Services (CRS), "Egypt", 2008, <http://crs.org/egypt/>, (accessed July 28, 2008).

¹⁸⁴ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, July 2006, p. 30, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 9, 2008).

4.5 Access to education.

Although the Egyptian government placed a reservation in the right of refugee children to public education, this right should be seen in the perspective of broader obligations under the universal human rights system.¹⁸⁵ As mentioned earlier, it could be argued that Egypt as a signatory to the Convention in the Rights of the Child is obliged to provide access to public education for all children residing on its territory. However, this obligation is not being upheld, and most Iraqis in Egypt have to choose between expensive private schools for their children, or no school at all.

According to an official at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, of the 4300 Iraqi students registered in Egyptian schools for the school year of 2007/2008, 4000 were registered at private schools, while 300 had in some way succeeded in accessing public schools.¹⁸⁶ The number of children getting help from UNHCR through the organization Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in the same period was approximately 2000. CRS gives financial assistance for refugee families to pay school fees, as explained earlier. The maximum assistance per child is 1400 LE in 2008.¹⁸⁷

Iraqis also have the opportunity to study in Egyptian universities, provided they pay higher fees as foreigners, and in foreign currency. School fees vary according to what kind of school it is. The public schools are cheapest, with fees from 50 LE (approximately 9 US\$) per year. However, as a result of the reservations made on the 1951 UN Convention, they are almost impossible to access for Iraqis. In addition they are more expensive for refugees, as for all foreigners, who often have to pay 250 LE (45 US\$) per year. The choice for most Iraqi families, if they have the means to send their children to school at all, is between private schools or refugee schools run by churches. Commonly refugee schools have Sudanese teachers and an Egyptian curriculum and cost 25-135 LE per year. Classes are in Arabic, with the exception of the St. Andrews, All Saints and African Hope schools, which are in English. Children get an education, but will not receive any recognized certificate for their efforts. The Egyptian government does not recognize refugee schools, and this makes it impossible for the

¹⁸⁵ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, and Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, July 2006, p. 19, available from <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed October 9, 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Personal contact at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, March 25, 2008.

¹⁸⁷ Personal contact at CRS, March 27, 2008.

children to enter colleges or universities after finishing.¹⁸⁸ Of the 2000 Iraqi children receiving assistance from CRS, only one attended a refugee school. The reason for choosing this school is probably the low costs compared to private schools, which costs from 1000 LE (180 US\$) to over 6000 LE (1085 US\$). Most often Iraqis want their children to attend a school that already has a number of Iraqi students, and that is not too far from their residence. Of the families of the interviewees for this paper with the means of sending their children to school, all had chosen private schools.

Muṣṭafā, a 38 year old man from northern Iraq, has a son in a private school in 6. of October City. His 9 year old daughter also attended school while in Iraq, but in Egypt the family can only afford to send one of their children to school. They have received assistance from CRS, but the money does not cover all the costs, as the school fees are 2,500 LE (450 US\$) per year (and, as mentioned above, the maximal assistance per year from CRS is 1,400 LE per year). Muṣṭafā is very sad about not being able to give all his children an education, and had tears in his eyes when he said; “Sometimes I just want to cry when I look at my daughter... What kind of future does she have? What can I give her?”¹⁸⁹

According to the CRS, many Iraqi children are having a hard time adjusting in Egyptian schools. They are often afraid and traumatized, and do not want to attend school. They also face an unfamiliar curriculum, and some have problems understanding English. In Iraq children start learning English in the fifth grade, while in Egypt they start much earlier, in kindergarten. Iraqis must also get used to learning about Egypt’s geography and history rather than their own.¹⁹⁰ When interviewing an official at CRS in March 2008, I was told that they had a big enough budget to pay for that school year to pay fees for all Iraqis approaching them. According to the UNHCR, this is about to change. “In Egypt and Lebanon, where most Iraqi refugee children are enrolled in private schools, more than 4,000 children will not receive the education grants that UNHCR offered in 2008 to enable them to continue their education.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ African and Middle East Refugee Assistance, http://www.amera-uk.org/ref/closed_files.html, (accessed May 18. 2008).

¹⁸⁹ Personal contact, November 17. 2007.

¹⁹⁰ Massihzadegan, Setarreh. “Iraqi refugees in Egypt seek secure education” Medill News Service, June 2007, http://www.immigrationhereandthere.org/2007/07/post_13.php (accessed May 13. 2008).

¹⁹¹ UNHCR, “UNHCR seeks donor help amid funding shortfall for Iraqi operation”, Geneva, May 9. 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/iraq?page=news&id=48246c3c4>, (accessed May 31. 2008).

Other than primary education, there also exist some classes that Iraqi refugees can attend. Student Action for Refugees (STAR) offers Arabic and English classes to all refugees. Two of the Iraqis interviewed were attending English classes in 6. of October City, where STAR are using a community centre for Sudanese refugees as their classrooms. There are also other service providers offering English classes, such as Refuge Egypt, offering English classes in three different locations around Cairo. Some also offer vocational training such as courses in computer skills. Muṣṭafā, for example, had taken a course on fixing computers, and used his newly acquired skills to help acquaintances in Egypt with their computer problems. This did not earn him much money (around 10 LE, or under 2 US\$ per computer fixed), but it made him feel more useful, and again this helped him cope with his situation as a refugee.

4.6 Access to work.

With Egypt's high unemployment (9.1 per cent in 2007)¹⁹² and the need to obtain a work permit, jobs in the formal economy have become practically unattainable for refugees. Instead, most work in the informal economy, where they compete with locals in mainly low-skilled jobs, such as street vendors, construction workers, cleaners and domestic workers.¹⁹³ The work easiest obtained for refugees is as domestic workers. Many women, especially in the African refugee communities such as the Sudanese, are working as cooks or maids for both Egyptian and wealthier Sudanese families in Cairo. In fact, so many Sudanese women work as maids that the gender roles have been altered, with women being the main bread winners.¹⁹⁴

From my interviews, this seems not to be true for many Iraqis. When asked about the issue, one of the interviewees answered that it has to do with the pride of the Iraqi people. The Iraqis in Egypt are, as mentioned above, mostly well educated and from the middle class, and this makes it hard for them to take on domestic work for other families. In fact, compared to studies on the Sudanese refugee community in Cairo, it seems that not many Iraqis work at all. In Grabska's study, she writes that almost three-fourths were involved with some kind of

¹⁹² Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "The World Factbook", Egypt, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹⁹³ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 2006, p. 299 of the PDF, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹⁹⁴ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Marginalization in Urban...", p. 299.

work, usually in the informal sector.¹⁹⁵ This is a big difference from my own findings, where only two of my thirteen respondents had had paid work during their stay in Egypt. One reason of this is arguably that the Sudanese community is well established in Egypt, as many refugees have lived in the country for many years. Also, Iraqi refugees are almost all hoping for resettlement, and are for that reason not investing as much as they could in their lives in Egypt.

A minority of displaced Iraqis in Egypt decide to use their savings to open a business. Even a small shop or internet café can help to try to support their families; many do this by selling their property and possessions in Iraq to meet the monetary requirements of an Egyptian “investor visa”. This also ensures their whole family a temporary residence permit of 5 years and provides the right to invest an existing business or open a new one. Many Iraqis who choose this visa do so because they fear the consequence of becoming a recognized refugee: stories from Iraqis who came before them told about limited job options outside the informal economy.¹⁹⁶

The owners of Iraqi businesses, like bakeries and small shops, are often hiring fellow Iraqis to work for them, creating some job opportunities for their countrymen. Although I did not interview anyone owning a business, I bought bread from an Iraqi bakery and ate at Iraqi restaurants, trying to get a better understanding of the community. From what I observed, a large majority of the customers at the Iraqi restaurants were Iraqis, and the ones shopping at the bakeries and sitting at Iraqi internet cafés were also Iraqi, judging from their Arabic dialects.

It is not possible to know how many Iraqis that have managed to open up a business in Egypt, but when I asked other researchers and people working with Iraqi refugees about it, the answer was always that it was a small percentage of the refugees. One of the first things all the interviewees for this paper mentioned regarding this issue were the problems concerning the restrictions of employment, which they all saw as their biggest obstacle to leading better

¹⁹⁵Grabska, Katarzyna, “Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo”, *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 2006, p. 299 of the PDF, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed September 10, 2008).

¹⁹⁶Cugusi, Laura. “Just a Matter of Time”, Iraqi Voices in Cairo, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program, the American University in Cairo, April 22, 2008, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/fmrs/iraqivoicesincairo/Pages/Justamatteroftime.aspx>, (accessed May 16, 2008).

lives in Egypt. They were all greatly concerned for the future because they could see their money vanishing. With rising oil and food prices, the money runs out even faster than when they arrived in Egypt, and their desperation is growing.

Yāsmīn, a 46 year old mother of two from the Baghdad area, worked in one of the ministries in Iraq before the U.S. invasion. Because of her high education and good employment in Iraq, she found it extremely hard to adjust to life as a jobless person, and mentioned this as the most difficult thing to adapt to, alongside thinking of herself as a refugee.

During her stay in Egypt Yāsmīn has applied for many jobs, both in Egypt, in other countries of the region, and in Europe and the United States. At one point she even convinced her family to let her go back to Iraq to work there to send money to back her husband and children in Egypt. Before she left, however, she was asked to work as a volunteer helping other refugees in Cairo. She says this work helps her feel useful again, and that she feels much better when she has something to do. She will continue living in Egypt as long as the family can afford it, hoping to be resettled to the United States soon.

Muḥammad, a 26 year old man from Baghdad, was the only one of the interviewees who had been able to obtain a work permit, although he had to pay 500\$ for it. He obtained the permit to be able to work for an Asian company in Cairo, with which he had signed a four month contract. After the contract went out, he worked as a translator for a documentary made by a filmmaker visiting Cairo. At the time of writing he is jobless, and hoping for resettlement to the U.S. through the Direct Access Programme, as he used to be an interpreter for the American army in Iraq before fleeing.

Nūrī, a 35 year old woman from Baghdad, used to work in an arms factory back in Iraq. She fled to Cairo with her husband and three children in February 2006. Nūrī's husband managed to get work in a factory in 6. of October City, but he does not have a work permit, and so he works there illegally. He makes about 500LE per month, which is not enough to cover both rent and food for his family, so even when he has a job the family is still spending savings brought from Iraq. Nūrī's son attended a private school the first year in Egypt, but because of the high school fees he now attends a public school.

4.7 Access to health care.

Under Egypt's national policies on health care, refugees are considered foreigners in terms of access to services, and have to pay with their own money.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the easiest and least expensive way for refugees to access health services is through NGOs or faith-based organizations, although some of these, as the ones funded by UNHCR, only provides health care to people registered with the organization. Although all Iraqis I interviewed were registered with UNHCR, the ones that had needed medical attention in Egypt had most often used private hospitals, paying for it with their savings. They explained this to be both because they did not have information about where to go, but also because they expected private hospitals to be better than the clinics for refugees. According to the UNHCR, people with serious illnesses that have no chance of treatment in Egypt are supposed to be referred for resettlement. However, resettlement depends upon third countries' acceptance of their cases and not on the UNHCR.¹⁹⁸

The main provider of medical assistance to refugees is Caritas-Egypt. Caritas-Egypt does not work exclusively for refugees however, they also assist disadvantaged Egyptians. Refugees acquiring health care can either get this at the Caritas clinic itself, or be referred by them to another clinic, or a hospital. Usually the client has to pay 50 per cent of the cost, while Caritas provides the rest, receiving funding for this from UNHCR as their implementing partner. According to UNHCR Cairo, 1,200 Iraqis availed themselves of these services every month in the fall of 2007. Until November 2007, Caritas had assessed the needs and provided counselling to some 5,240 Iraqi refugees. Time-limited assistance, particularly for housing, was provided to some 2,620 Iraqis.¹⁹⁹ Half of my interviewees had been to Caritas seeking assistance, but most had only been one time, saying they had to wait in the sun for many hours, and had problems getting help when finally speaking to Caritas employees. It is also quite a long way to travel from 6. of October City where most Iraqis live, to Caritas' offices in Garden City in the centre of Cairo.

¹⁹⁷ Grabska, Katarzyna, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (FMRS), the American University in Cairo & Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, University of Sussex, Brighton UK, July 2006, p. 22, http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/research_reports/Kasia_Egypt_Research_ReportEDITED.pdf, (accessed August 4, 2008).

¹⁹⁸ IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), "EGYPT: High rates of trauma, sickness among Iraqi refugees", UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Cairo, February 27. 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76988>, (accessed May 16. 2008).

¹⁹⁹ Personal contact at UNHCR Cairo, December 2007.

Refuge Egypt, an organisation based in All Saints Cathedral of the Episcopal Church and an implementing partner of the UNHCR, also provides medical assistance for refugees and asylum seekers in Cairo. The organization is responsible for counselling and medical assistance for pregnant refugee women, victims of torture, and TB cases.²⁰⁰ With increasing numbers of Iraqis seeking to access their services, in April and May 2007 the organization made an assessment on whether or not they should include Iraqis in their program for assistance. After conducting interviews with other service providers for refugees, UNHCR, and Iraqi refugees themselves, they decided against officially including Iraqi asylum seekers in their Mission Statement and target group of beneficiaries, and giving the reason that the Iraqis were not struggling financially as much as other refugee groups in Cairo at the time. Still, they decided on assisting Iraqis on a case-to-case basis.²⁰¹

According to Aḥlām, a medical doctor working with refugees in Cairo, Iraqi refugees have a higher rate of medical problems compared to other refugee populations, such as the Sudanese and Somalis. Iraqi children also have health problems unique to their population, which Aḥlām believes are attributable to radioactive waste left over from Iraq's war with Iran and the first Gulf War. 'Abīr 'Aṭīfa at the UNHCR says that psychiatric problems are also a growing cause for alarm within the Iraqi population in Egypt, and post-traumatic stress is also increasingly becoming a problem.²⁰²

Maryam, an Iraqi woman from the north of Iraq, developed epilepsy after watching her husband Muṣṭafā get shot in the streets of their home town early in 2006. After receiving several death-threats by what they refer to as terrorists, not knowing who actually sent them, they decided to flee the country, first to Syria, and then after a few weeks on to Egypt. Maryam brought with her all the documentation she got from her doctor in Iraq, stating her diagnosis, how she got ill, and her need of daily medication. In Cairo the family get some financial assistance from Caritas for the medicines, but not enough to pay for all of them. Muṣṭafā himself still has pains in his leg where the bullet went in and out, yet he does not take any medication. He simply cannot afford medication for both himself and his wife.

²⁰⁰ 2007 Arab Republic of Egypt Operations Plan, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.irefugees.org/articles/background/egypt.pdf>, (accessed May 16. 2008).

²⁰¹ Refuge Egypt, "Current Situation at Refuge Egypt – July 2007", http://refuge-egypt.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4:current-situation-at-refuge-egypt-july-2007&catid=7:news&Itemid=31, (accessed May 16. 2008).

²⁰² IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), "EGYPT: High rates of trauma, sickness among Iraqi refugees", UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Cairo, February 27. 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76988>, (accessed May 16. 2008).

Hishām is also in need of medical attention, related to injuries he received from a car bomb in Baghdad. During the attack he lost one of his ears and cracked his skull, leaving him with no hearing on one side. He knows of an operation that can help him hear on both ears again, but it is not possible to get it done in Egypt. He has a case pending with the IOM, and has been told that he has got good chances of resettlement. Hishām, who is single and came to Egypt alone, hoped he could make it to the US, get the needed medical treatment, and finish his studies before hopefully someday returning to Iraq with an education that could benefit his country. However, when realizing the small chances for resettlement even when in need of medical care not attainable in the host country, in addition to having spent most his savings, Hishām has now (October 2008) left Egypt and travelled back to Iraq in hopes of being able to complete his studies there.

4.8 Housing.

Egypt's rent-protection laws ensure that Egyptian nationals do not have to pay exorbitant rents. However, refugees and asylum seekers do not have access to the rent-controlled housing available to Egyptians and have to find housing on the private rental market, paying up to 10 to 15 times more rent than nationals.²⁰³ Housing constitutes the single largest expense per month for Iraqi refugees in Cairo.

As most of the Iraqis interviewed for this paper had owned their own houses in their home country, it is hard for them to adjust to living in small, rented apartments. The interviewees explained to me how they lived in Iraq, and wanted me to understand that even if they were not living in a slum area and sleeping on the ground in Cairo, this was still a big step down for them. Not being comfortable with their living arrangements gets even harder when, as some Iraqis told me, they are staying inside their apartments most of the time, not working and not having much social contact except with the family members living in the same apartment. Although Iraqis are not able to live the way they used to in their country, none mentioned any problems actually finding an apartment, although most mentioned that they found the prices too high. In Egypt they were paying between 500 and 1200 LE per month for their apartments.

²⁰³ Briant, Natalie and Andrew Kennedy, "An Investigation of the Perceived Needs and Priorities Held by African Refugees in an Urban Setting in a First Country of Asylum", *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 17, No. 4, 2004, available from <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/17/4/437?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=perceived+needs&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed October 27. 2008).

Maryam, Muṣṭafā and their three children settled in 6. of October City when they arrived in Egypt late in 2006. At first they rented a big apartment, but after a few months they moved to a smaller apartment in the same neighbourhood when they realized they could not find work and had to live only off their savings. They also had to sell the car they bought when first arriving, and buy an older one. The family is, as most Iraqis in Egypt, hoping for resettlement to a western country. Muṣṭafā, working as a policeman in Iraq, has got letters of appreciation from the US army and other documents to prove what he tells the UNHCR is true, and had hopes that this would make the resettlement process easier and quicker. However, the family ran out of money before they heard anything about their resettlement application, and left Egypt for Iraq in July 2008.

The only Iraqi I interviewed that was living with a person which was not a member of his family was Hishām. He was also the only Iraqi I met who had left Iraq by himself without any family members. To be able to pay the rent, he rented an apartment with another Iraqi man who had also fled by himself. For this apartment they paid LE 350 per month each.

4.9 Egyptians' view of the influx of Iraqis.

Factors that positively influence the refugees' relation between their host communities are: a shared ethnic background, existing economic interactions before the influx, and sharing cultural and linguistic attributes. These factors are an asset for peaceful coexistence and local integration²⁰⁴ (or local settlement, as in this case). Thus, since Iraqis and Egyptians share the Arabic language and many cultural traits, as well as the fact that so many Egyptians have lived and worked in Iraq the last decades, the local population in Egypt has been generally positive towards the Iraqi refugees and have been relatively sympathetic to their plight. The Iraqis' ability to blend in has also eased their adaptation to Egyptian society compared with African refugee groups, who look much more different from Egyptians, and who often do not speak Arabic.²⁰⁵ However, the fact that some Iraqis coming to Egypt had some resources when they came has brought many Egyptians to think that this is the case for all Iraqis

²⁰⁴ De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence", UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2006, p. 26, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 20, 2008).

²⁰⁵ Yoshikawa, Lynn, "Iraqi Refugees in Egypt", in Forced Migration Review June 2007, Special Issue on the Iraqi Displacement Crisis, p. 29, can be obtained through Reliefweb, <http://www.fmreview.org/iraq.htm>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

entering the country. The Iraqis are mostly perceived as well-off, and accused of bringing up prices, especially in the real-estate business.

Two real-estate agents in Cairo, when asked if the Iraqis really were to blame for the rise in prices, answered that they believed this to be true, especially the prices for apartments in 6. of October City.²⁰⁶ This view is not shared either by the UNHCR or the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, who states that even if there were 150,000 Iraqis in Cairo and they all were wealthy, that is not a number big enough to bring up prices in a city of more than 17 million people.²⁰⁷ Some Iraqis did have money when they arrived in Egypt, but as they are not allowed to work these savings are soon depleted.²⁰⁸ As Muṣṭafā explains; “We sold everything before we fled Iraq, but without a job the money does not last that long. We are hoping to be able to stay in Egypt until my son’s school year is over, after that we no longer have the opportunity to stay here²⁰⁹ ”.

On the governmental level the view of Iraqi refugees is somewhat different. The Egyptian National Security Authority held a committee meeting early in 2007 assessing new measures for Iraqis in Egypt. These measures included prohibiting Iraqi investment in certain business sectors, deemed “sensitive” sectors. The proposal called for the General Authority for Free Trade and Investment (GAFI) not to grant licenses for Iraqis wanting to invest in programming, printing, aviation, communications, media production, security companies, employment companies and schools. This meeting was attended by representatives from several security bodies such as the national security police, the secret service, and military intelligence as well as GAFI and the Foreign Ministry. Another recommendation by the committee was to prohibit any official mass gatherings of Iraqis and the opening of any private schools for the Iraqi community.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Personal contact, October 2007.

²⁰⁷ Personal contact at UNHCR, December 1007, and at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in March 2008.

²⁰⁸ Personal contact with Barbara Harrell-Bond, October 2007.

²⁰⁹ Personal contact, November 2007.

²¹⁰ Hussein, Abdel-Rahman. “Committee Assesses New Measurements for Iraqis in Egypt”, Daily News Egypt, April 11, 2007, <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=6535>, (accessed March 20. 2008).

4.10 Livelihood strategies.

In order to handle their situation as refugees, Iraqis have developed different strategies. Firstly, fleeing from one's country to find safety and to protect remaining assets can be regarded as a livelihood strategy in itself. However, upon settlement in the first country of asylum (often a neighbouring country, such as in the case of the Iraqis in the region), many refugees find it difficult to build up a decent livelihood, and yearn for a better life elsewhere, often in the West.²¹¹ Refugees do not only migrate in order to leave their harsh living conditions behind but also because they anticipate certain opportunities and conditions elsewhere.²¹² In the case of Iraqis in Cairo, resettlement programmes can be regarded as one such opportunity. Thus applying for resettlement is also considered a livelihood strategy, with the refugees hoping to come to a country where they can find not only safety (which they have in Egypt), but also employment and education for their children, amongst other things.

Another livelihood strategy known from the literature on refugees is remittances (money transfers) from friends or relatives living abroad, often in a Western country, but also from the home country. Since this has become a common theme in much of the recent literature on refugees, I was somewhat surprised to find that of the Iraqis I interviewed, only one family were receiving remittances. Muḥammad, living with his mother and two brothers in Naṣr City, received approximately 300-400\$ from his sister each month to provide for the family. His sister had previously been working for the American army in Iraq, and had managed to get a job in the United States. At the time of the interview she worked as a doctor in the States, sending part of the money she earned to her family members in Egypt and Iraq, and hoping that they at some point could come and live with her in the US.

A livelihood strategy that was employed by all Iraqis I interviewed was bringing with them savings from Iraq. There were, however, big differences in how much they had brought with them, not just depending on how much they owned before fleeing Iraq. Some had sold off all of their belongings before leaving Iraq, while others had kept some of their belongings. Reasons given for not selling everything was that they did not anticipate staying in Egypt for an extended period of time, or because they thought they could easily go back and sell off the

²¹¹ De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence", UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2006, p. 11, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 20, 2008).

²¹² De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence", UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2006, p. 11, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?id=search>, (accessed September 20, 2008).

rest of what they owned if necessary. Also mentioned was the fear of being robbed on the way (especially those travelling to Syria before coming to Egypt, having to travel on dangerous roads through Iraq to get there).

While residing in Cairo, family and community-based support systems are the main mechanisms through which most refugees survive. Refugees depend on each other to share information about housing, news about UNHCR and other organizations, residence permits, detention problems, jobs, education opportunities and other matters concerning them.²¹³ Even though, as mentioned above, it is difficult to establish community organizations in Egypt because of laws forbidding more than five people to gather in public, some refugee groups in Cairo, especially the Sudanese, have managed to found organizations to help others in their refugee community without the authorities preventing them. Among the organizations developed by refugee groups are the Sudan Development Initiative Abroad (SUDIA), the Somali Refugee Committee of Egypt (SRCOE), and the Union of Great Equatoria, amongst many others.²¹⁴

In coping with legal, social and economic marginalization, consciously or not refugees also resort to strategies that deepen their state of exclusion. In relying on their familial and ethnic networks for support as well as on official and informal assistance provided by NGOs, refugee-based organizations and UNHCR, refugees can become further separated from the host society.²¹⁵ To some extent one can say that this has happened to Iraqis in Cairo, who seem to be isolating themselves both from their Egyptian hosts, from other refugee groups, and even from their fellow Iraqis.

The reason of Iraqis avoiding other Iraqis has been explained by different researchers as an issue of mistrust stemming from the reasons they fled their homeland.²¹⁶ As Harrell-Bond puts it; “Iraqis don’t trust each other because they don’t know who is who. They are incapable

²¹³ Grabska, Katarzyna “Living on the Margins: Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt,” Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper 6, June 2005, p. 299.

²¹⁴ Shafie, Sharifa, “FMO Research Guide: Egypt: Needs and Responses”, Forced Migration Online, Updated July 2005, <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo029/fmo029-4.htm#top>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

²¹⁵ Grabska, Katarzyna, “Marginalization in Urban Spaces of the Global South: Urban Refugees in Cairo”, in *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3, August 8, 2006, p. 300 of the PDF available at <http://jrs.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/19/3/287?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=grabska&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed August 11, 2008).

²¹⁶ Yoshikawa, Lynn, “Iraqi Refugees in Egypt”, in *Forced Migration Review* June 2007, Special Issue on the Iraqi Displacement Crisis, p. 29, can be accessed from <http://www.fmreview.org/mags1.htm>, (accessed August 5, 2008).

of making social networks – you can't live anywhere in the world without a social network".²¹⁷ This is also the reason the Iraqis themselves use to explain the lack of contact between them. Some, as Muḥammad, worked directly for the Americans in Iraq, and does not want anyone to know this in fear of what they could do to him or his family. Others, as 'Āṭif, used to be a member of the Baath party in Iraq, working against the Americans when they invaded Iraq in 2003, and thus also has strong reasons for staying away from other Iraqis. It is not hard to comprehend that these are people do not want to mingle while in exile, and that there exists big mistrust issues among the Iraqi refugees. However this mistrust makes Iraqi refugees lose a lot of the social capital other refugee groups depend on in Cairo. Important to note though, is that the lack of contact between Iraqis is seems only to be between those who do not previously know each other. They still have contact with their family in Egypt, as well as with friends living in Egypt that they knew before fleeing. They also frequently talk on the phone with their family and friends that are still living in Iraq. All the Iraqis interviewed said that they had frequent contact with their relatives and friends that are still in the home country.

Iraqi refugees in Cairo also seem to isolate themselves from their Egyptian hosts. This is also a known survival strategy for other refugee groups in Cairo.²¹⁸ Of the interviewees, most answered that the only contact they had with Egyptians was as neighbours or tenants. Only one, Aḥmad, said he had Egyptian friends, with which he sometimes played football in the neighbourhood where they all lived. The recurring explanation among the respondents for this lack of contact is that they don't feel they have anything to talk about because of cultural and educational differences, and that they are in the process of accepting their situation as refugees, and don't have the energy to get to know new people. Maryam puts it this way; "Egyptians are not educated. They are rude and use bad language, and I don't want my children to start acting like them".

Although the respondents don't have much contact with Egyptians, they generally did not feel discriminated against. They do not get angry looks or shouted at in the streets because they are of a different skin colour, as frequently happens to refugees from Sudan and other African

²¹⁷ IRIN, "*Iraqi Refugee Return Driven by Lack of Money*", <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76209> (accessed May 5, 2008)

²¹⁸ Al-Sharmani, Mulki, "Livelihood and Identity Constructions of Somali Refugees in Cairo", Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper No. 2, July 2003 p. 27, the American University in Cairo, available at <http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/cmrs/reports/Pages/default.aspx>, (accessed August 6, 2008).

countries. As Yāsmīn puts it; “I understand that Egypt is a poor country and high unemployment, so that they do not have jobs for us. I am grateful to the Egyptians for letting us live here, and we are treated in a respectful way”. Muḥammad, having lived in Jordan before coming to Egypt, makes a comparison between the two: “Egyptians are much friendlier to Iraqis than the Jordanians. In Jordan I was treated badly, but in Egypt I am respected and generally feel welcomed. It is not like that for my friend from Sierra Leone. He is discriminated against because he has black skin. People look at him funny and say cruel things to him”.

This isolation of Iraqi refugees is also found by other researchers in Jordan and Syria. In both countries, Iraqis are said to have a sense of isolation which is striking compared to many other refugee situations. Most of the people interviewed by researchers in both countries continued to fear those who persecuted them in Iraq. In some cases they reported actually having seen some of the individuals who were harassing and hurting them; in other cases they were convinced that members of the persecuting social group were present. This situation makes Iraqis fearful of each other and leads to the isolation of Iraqis, which was found to be present and striking in both countries. Following their isolation of Iraqis, individuals and families are turning their stress inward, with the stress and trauma symptoms emerging among both adults and children. The isolation affects as well the ability of the Iraqi community to provide mutual support and the ability if the international agencies and local governments to provide assistance.²¹⁹

In her paper on Sudanese refugee community in Cairo, Grabska explains that although local integration is considered rather undesirable, both by the host community and refugees, the interactions between the two groups cannot be characterized as purely confrontational and hostile. In many ways, the process of marginalization is brought on by both communities. Egyptians perceive refugees as competitors for meagre resources and particularly to blame for the bad state of the economy. At the same time, the newly arrived Sudanese refugees do not intend to stay in Egypt for long. They see it as a transfer point to a better life in the West and, hence, the majority does not invest in their current location. The desire for moving on and away from Egypt is strong. This hope, even if unrealistic, allows them to cope with their precarious living and economic conditions and, at the same time, removes them from the

²¹⁹ Loughry, Maryanne and Duncan, Julianne, “Iraqi Refugees in Syria: A Report of the ICMC-USCCB Mission to Assess the Protection Needs of Iraqi Refugees in Syria”, p. 18-19, April 2008, http://www.usccb.org/mrs/iraqi_refugees_syria_4-2008.pdf, (accessed May 26, 2008).

possibility of greater integration with the local society.”²²⁰ As mentioned above, Egyptian authorities, as well as refugees themselves, do not think of local integration as a durable solution to their situation.

A livelihood strategy often used by refugees from the same country is sharing accommodation. This was, as mentioned above, found among the Iraqi refugees in Lebanon²²¹, and it is also a known strategy in Cairo, employed by different refugee groups. Through working as a volunteer for two months as an English teacher for Sudanese refugees in Cairo, I learned that living together with friends and sharing apartments was common in their community. However only one Iraqi interviewed for this study shared an apartment with a friend to manage the rent, both having come to Egypt without any family members.²²²

A strategy that has been identified by researchers to remain important for refugee communities after flight, is investing in education and skills development.²²³ Education may prepare children to a new, less localized future, and as such, the ability to gain an education in a refugee setting is very highly valued. This makes refugees willing to invest in education despite their limited opportunities to do so.²²⁴

The Iraqis I met through my fieldwork all thought of education as very important, and invested in their children’s future by sending them to private schools in Egypt.

Some livelihood strategies of Iraqi refugees found by researchers in Syria suggests that some are employing more extreme strategies than ones refugees residing in Egypt. Many reports have been written about Iraqi women and girls being forced into the sex industry in Syria to

²²⁰ Grabska, Katarzyna “Living on the Margins: Analysis of the Livelihood Strategies of Sudanese Refugees with Closed Files in Egypt,” Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Working Paper 6, June 2005, p. 80.

²²¹ ²²¹ Danish Refugee Council, “Iraqi Population Survey in Lebanon: A Report”, Beirut, November 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/home/pendoc.pdf?tbl=SUBSITES&id=4762690f2>, (accessed June 16, 2008), p. 10.

²²² Personal contact, November 28, 2007.

²²³ Horst, Cindy, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity and Transformations” in *Refugee Survey Quarterly* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, p. 13, available at <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/25/2/6?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=livelihood&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed August 15, 2008).

²²⁴ Horst, Cindy, “Introduction: Refugee Livelihoods: Continuity and Transformations” in *Refugee Survey Quarterly* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, p. 13, available at <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/25/2/6?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=livelihood&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>, (accessed August 15, 2008).

make enough money to provide for themselves and their families.²²⁵ Such reports have yet to be written about refugees in Egypt, in fact it has never been mentioned to me either by researchers or by the Iraqis I have talked to.

Lately the international community has been accused by international organizations of evading its responsibility towards refugees from Iraq by promoting a false picture of the security situation in Iraq when the country is not suitable for return now or in the foreseeable future. Especially the government of Iraq, together with the U.S. and the U.K. is mentioned in the media and reports from international organizations.²²⁶ Late in 2008, conditions are still not conducive to the return of large numbers of refugees. Both UNHCR and Amnesty International believe that the criteria for safe return are not met by the situation in Iraq.²²⁷ The last resort when it comes to livelihood strategies is returning to Iraq, which is getting to be more and more common. Depletion of their savings is the most common reason for returning to their home country, and not the belief that Iraq is a safer place to be than when they fled.²²⁸ One can question how voluntary this repatriation is, when the reason for returning is that they would not be able to survive in Egypt. The refugees are returning more because of push factors in Egypt than of pull-factors in Iraq. An Iraqi refugee quoted in *Time* states that “If I had more money, I would have stayed and never gone back. We hear from other returnees that they had regret going back because there is still bombing, kidnapping and killing.”²²⁹ Others are ready to go back, and feel it is their obligation to help rebuild Iraq.²³⁰

²²⁵ See for example Younes, Kristele, “Iraqi Refugees: Plan for Ongoing Support in an Unstable Region”, Refugees International Bulletin, October 30, 2008, available from <http://refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/10874>, (accessed November 4, 2008).

²²⁶ Amnesty International, “Iraq: World Governments Misleading and Failing Iraqi Refugees”, June 15, 2008, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/iraq-world-governments-misleading-and-failing-iraqi-refugees-20080615>, (accessed August 11, 2008).

²²⁷ Sassoon, Joseph, “Brain Drain and Return” in The Middle East Institute’s Viewpoints Special Edition, Washington D.C., July 2008, available at <http://www.mideasti.org/publications/iraqs-refugee-idp-crisis/preface-introduction>, (accessed August 13, 2008).

²²⁸ IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), “EGYPT: Iraqi refugee return driven by lack of money”, January 13, 2008, Cairo, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76209>, (accessed July 18, 2008) and Amnesty International, “Rhetoric and Reality: The Iraqi Refugee Crisis”, June 15, 2008, London UK, p. 3-4, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/011/2008/en/43d5f798-3637-11dd-9db5-cb00b5aed8dc/mde140112008eng.html>, (accessed July 18, 2008).

²²⁹ Yacoub, Sameer N. and Sinan, Omar from Associated Press (AP), in *Time*, “Refugees Return to Iraq”, August 11, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1831741,00.html>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

²³⁰ Yacoub, Sameer N. and Sinan, Omar, Associated Press (AP) in the *Star*, August 11, 2008, <http://www.thestar.com/Comment/article/476492>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

The Iraqi embassy in Cairo has started repatriating free of charge Iraqi refugees in Iraqi Prime Minister Nūrī al-Malikī's private jet.²³¹ The Iraqi embassy is claiming it receives 80 applications daily from Iraqis who mostly are listed as refugees by the UNHCR or are Iraqis studying in Egypt. The embassy says it is giving priority to families over individuals at this point.²³² However, in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, the Iraqi ambassador Sa'd Raḍā has stated that there are no statistics on the number of Iraqi applying for the trips.²³³ Mr. Raḍā also affirmed that once they returned to their country, these Iraqi citizens would be given facilitations to work both in Baghdad and the other governorates, stating that Iraq is on the verge of great economic development and that it needs all its Iraqis.²³⁴ Major General Qāsim al-Mūsāwī, the Iraqi military spokesman for Baghdad, has said to the Associated Press that the Iraqi government hopes to arrange up to two flights a week for returnees from countries around the Middle East, starting in August 2008²³⁵

One needs to question, though, whether the Iraqi authorities are likely to be able to assist Iraqis returning from neighbouring countries the way they say they will. After all, around 2 million Iraqis are displaced inside the country without much assistance from their government. Dr. Harrell-Bond, who as mentioned has been working closely with Iraqi refugees in Cairo, recently left Egypt. She says she left \$7,000 of her own money in Egypt to feed and house Iraqis, on the condition that they not use the money to return to Iraq. Her view of Iraqis returning to their country is clear: "No one's going back by choice. That's just bloody propaganda."²³⁶

When I first met Muṣṭafā and his family in their 6. of October City apartment, they had been living in Egypt for approximately one year, since the end of 2006. Unable to find work in Cairo, they have been living off their savings for the whole period in Egypt. They have

²³¹ Reliefweb, from Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA), "Iraqi refugees airlifted from Cairo to Baghdad on premier's jet", August 9, 2008, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/RMOI-7HCLMP?OpenDocument>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

²³² Reliefweb, from Deutsche Press Agentur (DPA), "Iraqi refugees airlifted from Cairo..".

²³³ Kenawi, Nadine in *Al-Miṣrī Al-Yawm*, "Today First Free Trip for Iraqi Refugees from Cairo Airport", August 11, 2008, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=116950>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

²³⁴ Kenawi, Nadine in *Al-Maṣrī Al-Yawm*, "Today First Free Trip for Iraqi Refugees from Cairo Airport", August 11, 2008, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=116950>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

²³⁵ Yacoub, Sameer N. and Sinan, Omar from Associated Press (AP), in *Time*, "Refugees Return to Iraq", August 11, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1831741,00.html>, (accessed August 12, 2008).

²³⁶ Knickmeyer, Ellen, "An Iraqi Exodus: Out of Money and Options in Egypt, Some Refugees Are Returning Home", *Washington Post Foreign Service*, September 7, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/06/AR2008090602665_pf.html, (accessed October 14, 2008).

received some funding from UNHCR through Catholic Relief Services to pay their son's school fees, but the money did not even cover the cost of the fees for one school year. When I left Egypt in March 2008, Muṣṭafā told me he thought they would be able to stay in Egypt until the end of his son's school year, but that after that they would have to go back to Iraq if they had not managed to get resettled yet. At the time of writing this, in July 2008, I have just received an e-mail from Muṣṭafā, sent from Iraq. He explains that he did not have enough money to continue living in Egypt, and had no other choice than to return to his home country, which he left after being shot by terrorists. The family travelled home on their own expense, without receiving any financial assistance for the trip.

The news of the Iraqis currently returning to their country is getting much attention, both in Arab and international media. When I contacted one of the Iraqis I got to know during the fieldwork in Cairo, I asked about the Iraqis leaving Cairo to go back to Iraq on the planes sent by the Iraqi government. He told me, as UNHCR and Amnesty International are currently stating, that most are leaving because of desperation and lack of funds, not because they believe it to be safe for them to return. He was of the conviction that the Iraqi government are promising the returnees their homes back as well as employment, but that this is just propaganda to show the rest of the world that Iraq is safe again.²³⁷

²³⁷ Personal contact, August 13, 2008.

5. Summary.

As time goes by, the situation for Iraqi refugees in Egypt is getting increasingly desperate. Because of the restrictions on the right to employment, most Iraqis are living exclusively or partially off their savings, and many, if not all, are at this time running out of money. In lack of any durable solutions, some have even started returning to Iraq. There they run the risk of ending up as internally displaced, not being able to return to their homes because of sectarian problems, or because someone have moved in to their house after they left.

The Egyptian authorities are letting Iraqi refugees stay on their territory legally, but are not offering any other relief to the refugees. The government is does not want refugees to be integrated into Egyptian society at all, but rather wants them to leave as soon as possible, although they as a rule are not expelling anyone. What the refugees want the most is not money or food distributions, but the right to work and the opportunity to earn their own money. Being without a job is mentioned by the respondents for this paper as the biggest obstacle to their well-being. But with Egypt's high unemployment rate and with many Egyptians living under the poverty line, the Egyptian authorities are not interested in integrating the Iraqi refugees into the country. Also, they would have to give rights to the 500,000-3 million Sudanese and 50,000 Palestinians in Egypt, as well as other refugee groups that are living in the country, and this is something they are not willing to do.

Another main issue concerning Iraqis in Cairo is their inability to enrol their children in Egyptian public schools. The families that can afford it are enrolling their children in the much more expensive private schools, but this is getting increasingly harder as many Iraqis are running out of money. Also, spending almost all of their time inside their rented apartments was often mentioned by the Iraqis when asked about their situation in Cairo. Because of little contact with the society as a whole, they have a lot of time to think about how things were better before, and worrying about their and their children's futures. The result of this is often little sleep and depression. In sum, of the problems Iraqis mention are unemployment, running out of money, the inability to enrol their children in public schools, being disconnected from family members and friends, sleep problems and "thinking too much", the desire to be resettled, and self-esteem-issues related to the lack of work and the perception of themselves as refugees.

In the absence of a strong community in Cairo, the family plays the most important role in taking on the burdens of social institutions that have been destroyed through sectarian division and displacement. The family has become a focal point for the support network to address daily livelihood concerns, such as obtaining residency permits, employment, and education. This is different from other refugee groups in Cairo, who have been able to start community groups in order to cater for each others needs. Living with less social capital than other refugees make Iraqis less able to access information that could make their situation easier. Through my interviews I found that Iraqi refugees in Cairo lack adequate information about services and who is eligible for it. However, this is an issue that is currently being addressed by researchers in Cairo, and hopefully that will make the information more accessible to all refugee groups.

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In addition I also spoke to employees at Refuge Egypt, Caritas, Student Action for Refugees (STAR) at AUC, two real estate agents in Cairo, and many Egyptians met during the fieldwork.

Abstract

This paper examines the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt's capital Cairo. Although the Egyptian government has signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, it has made restrictions to it which makes it extremely hard for refugees to obtain work permits and to enrol their children in public schools, amongst other things. The Egyptian authorities let in Iraqi refugees until January 2007, and are letting those who came before that stay legally (although temporary) in Egypt. However, the government is not providing any assistance to them besides letting them stay in the country.

Because of the restrictions on employment, most Iraqis in Cairo live exclusively or partially off savings brought from Iraq. Because of rising prices in Egypt, the money is running out faster and faster. Some receive remittances from abroad, either from a western country, from Iraq, or both, but most have no money coming in, and are becoming more and more desperate. As a survival strategy some have now returned to Iraq, mostly because they no longer have enough money to get by in Egypt, and not because they believe Iraq to be much safer than when they fled.

In contrast to other refugee groups in Cairo, such as the Sudanese who have stayed there for a long time, Iraqis do not have any community groups catering to their needs. Due to big mistrust issues in the Iraqi refugee community in Egypt, they do not seem to have much contact with other Iraqis at all. Not having as much social capital in their host country as do other refugee groups makes them less likely to gather the information they need about UNHCR, health facilities etc., which is often provided by other refugees from the same country.

In sum, of the problems Iraqis mention as big concerns are unemployment, the inability to enrol their children in public schools, being disconnected from family members and friends, sleep problems, the desire to be resettled, and self-esteem issues related to the lack of work and having to perceive themselves as refugees.

